

# IRELAND RISING IN THE NORTH



**BIG  
FAKE**

20p

# BIG FLAME

*Big Flame is a revolutionary socialist organisation. We are publishing this pamphlet on Ireland because we hope it is of use to the Irish revolution. The class struggle being fought in Ireland is of absolute importance for the Irish working class, for the English working class and for working class power everywhere. Yet it is hugely misunderstood, even on the left here. We must understand the importance and content of that struggle. The strength of the working class is international. The struggle of our brothers and sisters in the Catholic ghettos of the Six Counties of Ireland occupied by our bosses' army is our struggle too.*

*Few current struggles show more how the creativity and revolutionary power of the working class are built. In Ireland, it is a power that has been built in the ghettos, not by factory workers striking, but by housewives, unemployed people, kids. It will be the success or failure of their struggle that will determine the possibility of socialism in Ireland and in England. As long as the working class believes it has more in common with its own bosses than with the Irish working class, by chauvinism, then its ability to build a socialist society is weakened.*

*We see this ability every time working class people force their demands on the bosses, whether it's workers forcing their demands on management; tenants collectively winning what they want from councils, or women forcing the state to change its laws on contraception and abortion. This energy is also present, of course, in the well-publicised strikes and occupations of carworkers and miners. But it is also present in the less well-publicised struggles of local women fighting for a new nursery, of small factories that are occupied, of hospitals being forced to ban private patients.*

*And, in Ireland, it is the whole of the Catholic ghettos that is pitted against the imperialist power of Britain. It is an extremely important battleground of class war, fought against our bosses, and it must be won*

*When we talk of 'vanguards of the working class', we mean all sections of the working class who are in struggle, not just those at the point of production. Nowhere is this more clear than in Ireland, where the vanguards of the struggle are mostly unemployed. We see Big Flame's role as contributing as much as we can to the bringing together of the class vanguards in England. We believe that this coming together and our victories at the expense of capitalism are the revolutionary process. We do not think that a revolutionary party can be created by a few left-wing militants coming together and calling themselves a party. Only out of a new level of mass struggle and with the new vanguards emerging out of that struggle can the revolutionary party be built.*

*We are a Marxist organisation; but we are not Maoists, Stalinists or Trotskyists. We see ourselves as inheriting a revolutionary Marxist tradition which includes many revolutionaries, but we see their writings as the collective voice of the particular period of class struggle they were involved in. It's a tradition which also includes the revolutionary actions of working class people throughout history.*

*We hope that this pamphlet helps understanding of the mass struggle of the Irish working class and helps in building the Troops Out Movement which is currently the focus of Big Flame's activity around Ireland. The TOM is the main weapon we have. That is why we have worked within it since its foundation. We work in the interests of the Irish struggle. Our struggle is common.*

*Big Flame groups exist in Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester and London. We are active in hospitals, car and other factories; among housewives, tenants and students. We also work in the Troops Out Movement and the Chile Solidarity Campaign. Nationally, our work is co-ordinated through Waged Workplaces, Education, Women's and Ireland Commissions, and overall by a National Committee.*

**VICTORY TO THE IRISH REVOLUTION!**

**TROOPS OUT NOW!**

**SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE AS A WHOLE!**

## CONTENTS

### A PEOPLE AT WAR

#### 6 YEARS ON

p3

#### INTERVIEWS

Coming into struggle

p5

Army occupation

p6

Resistance

p8

The current situation - July 1975

p11

#### A QUESTION OF CLASS

National Liberation and Socialism

p13

#### THE HISTORY OF DIVIDE AND RULE

Loyalism and the Orange Order

p17

#### THE SECRET WAR

p20

#### STUCK IN HELL - Interview with ex-soldier

p22

#### NO TO THE JENKINS' LAW

p23

#### T.O.M.

p24

#### 'A NATION THAT ENSLAVES ...'

p26

#### MAP

p29

#### GLOSSARY

p30

#### CHRONOLOGY

p31

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# A PEOPLE AT WAR



## SIX YEARS ON

In 1969 the first bombs of the present troubles in the North of Ireland exploded. These bombs were the work of a Protestant organisation, the Ulster Volunteer Force. In 1968 the first Civil Rights march took place. Throughout 1969 the Catholic ghettos were constantly invaded by Protestants and by the forces of 'law and order' — the B-Specials, and by the police force, the RUC. Houses were burnt out; petrol bombs were thrown, and Catholics were shot and beaten dead. Thousands of Catholics were intimidated out of their homes. When the RUC was beaten off the streets of the Bogside in Derry, the British Army was sent in to maintain the Northern state and to pacify the Catholics.

Over the last six years, the pace and development of the Irish struggle has been staggering. It's moved on and on. And despite all the state violence, Army harassment and Loyalist murder gangs, it is still moving on. 1975 could well be the year of civil war — the final price the Catholic working class will have to pay in order to achieve their freedom. No amount of 'reason' and 'moderation' can halt this process. A major clash of this sort has been brewing for fifty years, ever since Ulster was set up as a separate state and a permanent second-class Catholic minority was press-ganged into what was for them a police state. The fifty-year inbuilt conflict of Ulster is coming to a head. And the solution — whatever it is — will be neither easy nor cheap.

### PARTITION

The Partition of Ulster in 1920 was the seed of the present crisis. And that Partition did not come out of the blue. It came because British imperialism wanted to keep a direct hold on the profitable industries in the North of Ireland (ship-building, engineering and textiles), and wasn't prepared to let them go with the rest of the country and 'Home Rule'. And, after all, it served the British bosses well that most of Ireland should be kept economically underdeveloped and deprived of the wealth of the Northern industries. That way meant Ireland remained a source of immigrant labour and cheap food for Britain.

Partition also suited the plans of the local bosses. They didn't want to lose their 'free trade' access to the British markets. Around them was the whole Protestant community — weaned on sectarian privileges in jobs, housing and political rights and determined to keep it that way. The unity of Protestant bosses and workers in defence of these privileges was cemented by the organisation of the *Orange Order*. This was at the core of the movement in Ireland — Loyalist and imperialist — to prevent self-determination for the whole of the Irish people. It was anti-democratic, being against the will of the majority of the whole Irish people, and it was anti-working class, putting imperialism first and

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the Catholic working-class and peasants last. But in 1920 it was powerful enough to impose its will.

From that day onwards, Ulster was a police state, run exclusively by the Union (i.e. Tory) Party. The Protestant working class (with brief exceptions, such as the unemployment struggle in 1932) have backed up that state, and divided themselves off from the struggle and plight of their Catholic fellow-workers. And even the most democratic procedures were denied to the Catholics. It reaches the limits when, for instance, a two-thirds Catholic majority in Derry was prohibited – by a fixing of the election wards – from ever electing a majority to the City Council!

#### THE BORDER FADES

Republicans fought against this artificial Ulster for fifty years. But unsuccessfully. And it's ironic that the first real winds of change were blown in by none other than British imperialism itself. (Though, of course, in its own selfish interests.)

Over the years the economic situation in Ireland changed. In the North there was a decline in the old industries – shipbuilding, linen and aircraft – and new investment was coming (and would have to come) from overseas, in growth industries such as synthetic fibres and chemicals. At the same time, economic policy was being changed in the South. Since Partition the Southern state had used protectionist policies to try to build up Irish capital. By the early 1960s it was clear that the development of Irish industry had been seriously held back by restrictions on trade and the lack of export markets. Between 1965 and 1970 Southern Ireland moved from being Britain's ninth largest export market to her third largest. The South was becoming increasingly important to Britain.



From 1962 on, the Southern government introduced many financial concessions to attract foreign investment. New investment, North and South, raised the question of the whole organisation of the Irish economy. In short, the border was being made redundant by the changes in the economy. New investors would want to be able to exploit the labour market as a single market, and would want to avoid duplicating their distribution networks, and avoid 'wasteful duplication of resources' and unnecessary 'competitive effort in agriculture, commerce and industry' (1973 White Paper on Sunningdale). So British imperialism, in particular, wanted to set Ireland gradually on the road to a united, federal set-up, dominated by London, so that all Ireland could be exploited equally.

#### REFORMS AND BACKLASH

But, if support was to come from the South for steps toward a united, federal, capitalist Ireland, real change would have to take place in the North. The blatant discrimination against Catholics would have to be toned down. *This meant undermining the very basis of the Ulster state and the Protestant ascendancy.*

And here was the problem. Already a backlash had started. As the traditional Northern industries had declined and had been replaced by newer industries (often employing unskilled and Catholic workers), the Protestant working class had begun to see a threat to their relatively privileged position. As early as 1959 Ulster Protestant Action had been formed (by Ian Paisley among others) in order to 'keep Protestant and loyal workers in employment in times of depression, in preference to their Catholic fellow workers'. When it became obvious in the 1960s that pressures were coming from Britain for reform, the Protestant petit-bourgeoisie and working class really reacted. The Ulster Volunteer Force was re-formed in 1965. Bigoted demagogues like Paisley became popular Protestant leaders. When the Civil Rights marches started, reaction flared up.

The Civil Rights marches were started mainly by students and middle-class radicals, but soon drew support from the Catholic working class ghettos. The Catholics had been given hope by the talk of reform. The changes of the welfare state after the war had opened higher education to Catholics, and led to higher expectations, while social security payments removed some of the cutting edge of unemployment. The Civil Rights movement was the start of a process of Catholic working class people fighting for their needs – decent housing, more control over their lives, a rejection of the choice between low paid jobs or the dole.

But in fighting for their needs, the Catholic working class came into straight confrontation with the Northern Ireland state. While it was in Britain's interest that slow reforms should take place, the Catholic working class struggle for *immediate* change would have meant the destruction of the state in Northern Ireland and an end to the gradual economic and political changes that capital wanted. The only solution for the Northern state was repression.

For the Catholic working class, the choice was simple. Either to lie down and give up the struggle for its own needs or to confront the question of the state; to begin in a direct way the struggle to smash the sectarian Northern Ireland state which *directly* maintained their oppression and maintained the division in the working class. Essentially, this was the question which in 1969 divided the Irish Republican Army. The Provisionals were those who – for various reasons – saw the necessity to take up the national struggle. Among them were many of the 'hooligans' of the Battle of the Bogside, and similar battles in Belfast, who saw no hope of gaining any civil rights as long as Northern Ireland continued to exist as a separate state. The Officials were those who thought it possible to work for civil rights within Northern Ireland, and thereby to unify the working class. (The Officials were then, and still are, dominated by members of the Irish Communist Party.)

The Catholic working class chose to move forward – to continue to press their needs – and this brought them quickly into conflict with the state and with the Protestant working class, determined to defend their marginal privileges through defending the Protestant ascendancy. *In this way, the national question, i.e. the fight against the state, the colony of Ulster – is not an abstract idea but is question which has been posed directly as a part of the class struggle.*

The sections below are taken from interviews carried out in May '75 with people from minority areas in the North of Ireland who have been involved in the struggle. In the first section three women from the Ardoyne in Belfast describe the events of '69 and '70.



The demand for civil rights was met with police and Army violence.

## COMING INTO STRUGGLE

*What caused the attacks on the Catholic ghettos in 1969?*

**Bridie:** The Civil Rights march in '68. The people on the march were really beaten. This made people really angry. There was no IRA then. In '69, from Easter onwards, the Orangemen used to come down the Crumlin Road, beating their drums, painting on the church statues – 'Up The UVF' – and shout obscenities. Some of the Catholics are not great churchgoers, but they respect the church. In '69 the Protestants started stoning us. About the beginning of June it got so bad – and this has never been mentioned in the papers – that there was rioting with the police and the Protestants against the Catholics of Ardoyne for a full six weeks before the August troubles. This was every night from about 10 o'clock until 4 or 5 in the morning sometimes. The police used to run into Herbert Street and Hooker Street and throw CS gas in and try to catch people. If they caught anyone they beat hell out of them. They slaughtered them. The Orangemen used to follow the police in. We didn't call them Loyalists or Protestants then, just Orangemen. They'd follow the police in and start to smash the houses and then throw petrol bombs. They had the police to protect them from the people of the district. I seen the police turning round and joking with the people that were throwing petrol bombs. Not one of them was ever arrested.

**Ann:** The *hidings* that were going on in the streets! One night I was up at the top of Hooker Street and the police tender came flying round the corner and pinned this man against the wall. It deliberately mounted the footpath and pinned him against the wall twice. And the man was screaming blue murder. Then they pulled away and the people came out of their houses, even though they were getting hit; they came out and the B-Specials were kicking him. The Specials turned round – someone had already sent for a priest to anoint this man, and they wouldn't even let him. That man is lucky to be alive. He was going to die and he wasn't even throwing a stone.

Later on that night there seemed to be a lot of noise up on

the Crumlin and we thought, what's going on? So we went up to the end of the street and we couldn't get through, it was packed with police and B-Specials. But the people were coming down the street; people from the Crumlin Road. And those people were terrified – they were people who the Loyalists knew had not taken a part in any resistance to them. Well, the Loyalists gave them one minute to get out of their houses. But the police did not try to stop them burning their houses. Not one Loyalist was arrested. In Hooker Street about a quarter of the houses were burnt. At about twelve o'clock that night the police and B-Specials came round. I was upstairs watching, crouched down, for if they had of seen me at the window I'd have been shot dead. I turned round and heard the shooting in Herbert Street. That was the first time I'd heard shooting; I didn't know what it sounded like. I was terrified. And the next we heard was that a man in the next street who had been working on the buses all day had been shot dead. He'd only been back in his house for half an hour, and he went to pull down his window blind and the B-Specials shot him. And there was a young fellow of 14, two streets behind us, was shot dead.

**Eileen:** Every few minutes you'd see the people out in the streets, and they'd scatter because the jeeps were flying round the corner. And the ordinary people on the streets made petrol bombs. They collected round the doors, good-living people; people who went to mass and communion. The IRA just wasn't involved in this area in '69, it was just the people. It was a case of they had to survive, self-preservation, that was it. People had to defend themselves, it was no good meeting violence with passive resistance. There was nothing here to defend this area with. The people hadn't a thing – only petrol bombs and stones. There wasn't a gun in the area. The IRA in the Ardoyne was not formed until October or November '69. There is this song about the boys of the Ardoyne, a couple of lines go: 'For Ardoyne's long-haired ones, revenge will be sweet'. That's the long-haired boys, the government tried to make them out as thugs, hooligans. They were not – they were our protectors, only for them there wouldn't be Ardoyne at the moment. They were all young: the oldest were about twenty-three. They were ten, eleven, twelve-up. Some

children of six were helping to break the stones for the eleven-year-olds upwards to throw. But it was all everybody helping one another.

*How was the British Army received in the Ardoyne?*

**Ann:** It was welcomed, it's no good saying it wasn't. People came out and brought them tea. And because there was sniping from the Loyalists still, the men used to do vigilante at street corners in case the Loyalists would come and attack. The women had collected wood for huts and for wee fires for these men to do vigilante. Four men would take it in turns throughout the night. Now, not one of these men were armed; the IRA still wasn't operating yet in this area. Now the reason that the Army was welcomed in this area at least was that the people had nothing left to defend themselves with. There was no foodstuffs left, there was nothing. The people hadn't organised themselves. And at the time the Army came in, the people were terrified because they knew that the B-Specials were massing that very night in Flax Street Mill (that's now an army barracks), to finish off the Ardoyne. And they'd warned us then, and they've said it since, but that night they were going to do it. They had warned us that they would flatten Ardoyne. Now, it's an easy thing to do. The Ardoyne is like a basin. There's twenty-two streets, and right around it is Shankhill, Silverstream, and so on, which are strong UDA areas. Not five minutes walk from here there's the UDA club, the Jolly Roger. That's how close they are. And there's Army posts around this area, six of them, yet they don't see cars coming into this area and attacking the people. Their cameras are going twenty-four hours a day yet they don't see them go in and they don't see them go out.

**Bridie:** Now up till October '69, the relationship between the Army and the people was excellent, everything the British government could have desired. Now in October '69 there was trouble between the Army and the Loyalists on the Shankhill Road, and that was the first time anyone had opened up on the British soldiers. It was the Protestants



British soldiers 'peace-keeping'

who began that. And the Army turned round and began to be very hostile – against the Catholics! It wasn't the Catholics who were doing anything against the British Army at that time. They started searching houses and harassing people. They really just turned on the people, like it was orders: 'Cool the thing on the Shankhill and get stuck in on the Catholics.' And it gradually got worse into '70, and in early '70 the Provisional IRA was formed. It was an organised defence of the areas, that was all. A lot of people who joined it were just stone throwers and bottle throwers, but the IRA was organised to defend, and that's the only reason it started.

**Eileen:** If the Loyalists move in to attack the area, this is what happens. Once the Army has seen one shot fired back at the Loyalists, they move in on the Catholics and start sealing off streets, doing house-to-house raids and things like that. But they don't go into Loyalist areas. This happened in '72 – the Loyalists attacked the area and the IRA defended it, which was what everyone wanted them to do. We couldn't live without them at the moment. There's always a steady support for the IRA, and it's not just two or three people in each street, it's a lot more. I would say there are about fifty people in this street who support them all the way. If they aren't supporting it by being in it, they support it by opening their houses to them. And if there's trouble, the men and girls wouldn't have to kick in one door – no matter what the press would like you to think – not one. I've seen it myself. Every door would be left open, back and front. Sometimes the fellas and the girls would have to run down an alleyway to get away from the Brits, and all they have to do is to push the door and they can go right through the house. And there's not one piece of intimidation – there doesn't have to be. Not one. For the people know they can rely on the IRA. There's people in this district who won't even support the Green Cross, and that's money for Republicans inside, no matter what they're in the camps for – but when there's trouble, they'll leave their doors open. The IRA have proved themselves in '72 and numerous times since; people know they can rely on them.

#### ARMY OCCUPATION: INTRODUCTION

In the six years that the British Army has been in force in Ireland there have been five clear stages in British policy. The first – described in the section above – was *containment of the Catholic rebellion*. By July 1970 the British Army spokesmen no longer referred to 'peacekeeping' but *counter-insurgency*; the Army was at war with the IRA. In August 1971 internment without trial was reintroduced. In January 1972 the Army's tactics were clearly seen when they murdered fourteen people on a peaceful demonstration – Derry's Bloody Sunday. The Army's intention, of opening fire to draw out the IRA and have a shoot-out, failed when the IRA didn't respond. It has proved impossible for the Army to cover over this episode of cold-blooded murder.

As Catholic resistance continued, the British government retreated. In March 1972 *Direct Rule* was introduced. The Catholic working class had smashed Stormont. But this policy led to strong opposition among the Loyalists, and the British government took the opportunity of taking over the Catholic no-go areas. Military repression and harassment were stepped up, while at the same time attempts were made to buy out 'moderate' Catholic opinion by offers of 'power-sharing' between the two communities and limited co-operation between the North and the South. The Ulster Workers' Council strike in May brought a final end to this policy. Since then, despite the truce, it's been clear that the 'solution' the British government will try for will involve some kind of *Loyalist takeover*.

For the Catholics, the British Army is a foreign army of occupation. At times as many as 22,500 troops have been in Northern Ireland. The intensity of army occupation has to be seen to be believed – constant raids on people's houses; constant searching on the streets. In 1974 the Army made 71,914 raids, almost all on Catholic houses. A comparable scale of raids in Britain would mean five million raids a year. The Army's intelligence system covers details of the lives of thousands of Catholics. Through the six years,

\*Areas free from police and Army rule.





Women protest after murders on Bloody Sunday.

new techniques have constantly been introduced: water cannons, rubber bullets, plastic bullets, lead bullets, CS and CR gas, 'sensory deprivation' torture techniques, army propaganda... the list is endless. This is Kitson's vision of how the Army can be used — not just to suppress rebellion as a military operation, but a combination of military, political and psychological measures to ensure capitalism survives.

In this section we have a report from Colm, Terry and Bridie of what Army occupation has meant in Derry and Belfast.

#### IN DERRY

*What's it like having the British Army in your area?*

You'll not go into a street without seeing some sort of Army presence. You can be stopped any time by the Army and they'll ask your name, credentials, who lives next door, how many freckles there are on your elbow, and so on, and if you get stropy and don't answer questions, you're in for three-hour screening tests. Then more questions. The basis of it is harassment really because every young person has been lifted half a dozen times since the Army's been in, and they ask the same questions each time. We live in a mixed area just outside the Creggan estate. We've been raided at least fifty times in the two years previous to the IRA truce: at least once every two weeks. If got to the stage where, if there wasn't a raid in two weeks, even three weeks, we thought something was wrong. There was never anything found in our house. Most of the times they've been down, they've arrested at least three members, if not all the family, excluding my mother and the two youngest children (eleven and seven years). My brother, who's an ice-cream salesman, is continually harassed by the Army. It's an everyday occurrence for him. They take the stuff out of his van and leave it lying in the summer sun. He's been beaten up numerous times by the Army.

*Were you there on Bloody Sunday?*

I was at the front of the march, fairly near the bandstand, when Bernadette was speaking and the shooting started. There was rubber bullets to begin with, then there was the obvious change of note to lead bullets. People got down to get out of the line of fire as soon as possible. My younger

brother, who was sixteen, was standing at the flats when they came in and him and his three friends took off through the flats at the other side of the street. The Army pulled up into the square and two of his friends were shot dead in front of him. He had to jump over the bodies to get away. He took off after that — he was actually shot at himself. We went down later that night to see the holes where they had shot at him. He ran to get to where we live, up to the Creggan — he ran the whole way. When I got home later he was still in a state of shock. He was sitting there weeping, saying: 'They killed them, the bastards killed them'. We just couldn't get a sensible word out of him. People were shocked that night — anger and shock, getting more shocked as the anger wore off. Bloody Sunday was in a way one of the recruiting campaigns the IRA had. When people realised the extremes that the British Army would go to to stop them marching on their own streets, they realised the gun was the only way. The figure ran into a few hundreds of the people who walked to the Creggan that night to apply for membership.

#### IN BELFAST

*Can you tell us about the day that internment was introduced?*

The morning internment was introduced came as no surprise to us. We were staffing the relief centre round the clock and we had nine homeless families to look after. We watched hundreds of soldiers, their faces blackened, and convoys of saracens and ten-ton trucks furtively invade Ardoyne. We knew something sinister was afoot, and our guess was correct — internment was with us. At four they pounced and hell was let loose. All around us we could hear doors and windows being smashed in. The district was wakened by the screams of women as they watched while their fathers, sons and brothers — aged between fifteen and seventeen — were dragged and brutally beaten from their homes. Some of them in nothing more than underwear and trousers. In most cases they were barefoot and were forced to run through the streets for the waiting trucks — most of the streets were covered in broken glass and rubble from rioting. The men were herded into trucks, worse than any animal, and made to lie face down on the floor, sometimes two or three deep. We were not to find their whereabouts until about three days later. Ardoyne was left minus two

\*Set up in '69 to help homeless families

hundred men and boys. Most of the men who were lifted were wage-earners and fathers, their families were immediately brought down to a minimum income. As political prisoners, they refused to accept prison food or prison garb, so the families have to supply them with food parcels and clothing. Food parcels cost about eight to ten pounds a week. The men accept the cheapest clothes to try to alleviate the burden on their families. The Green Cross and the Prisoners' Defence Fund were organisations formed to raise money, door to door collections, fundations, raffles, selling second-hand clothes. We were soon able to pay £3 to a single man's family and £5 to married men's families. Men from ninety families were interned.

*What do the Army do when they search your house?*

The first time I was searched was in '71. The street was sealed off at top and bottom and nobody allowed out of their house. This was at half one in the morning, till they finished doing the house-to-house search at half-eight. So people were automatically out of bed at half-one, waiting for the soldiers to come up to their house. You couldn't fall asleep just waiting for the soldiers to rap your window you were too tense. Whenever they came in, two went upstairs, one stood at the bottom of the stairs, two came into the kitchen two into the scullery, four into the garden and

four into the yard. The children were in bed sleeping. They told me to go up and waken the children and bring them downstairs. The soldiers searched upstairs and downstairs; they took about an hour and a half. They lifted the floorboards in the back bedroom. I was one of the lucky ones for I got my floorboards nailed down again. Some of the people, not only did they lift the floorboards, but they knocked a hole through the ceiling to see into the kitchen to make sure there was no false ceiling. Whenever I went to put the three children to bed, the drawers of the dressing table were emptied on the floor; the bedclothes were on the floor. Now, how did they expect a three-year-old, a four-year-old and an eight-year-old to get into bed when it was all upside down? I had to go straight downstairs again to make sure they didn't take anything valuable (not that I had anything much that was valuable – I only had a ring, worth about £2). They'd taken money off an old woman which we had tried to get back, but they denied taking it. And I was afraid also that they might plant something in my house; that they had been known to do. They didn't plant anything that time, but another time, when they searched the house, my good friend L. searched my house systematically afterwards and, between two soup plates in the scullery, she found a bullet which was definitely not there beforehand.

## RESISTANCE: INTRODUCTION

The Army occupation, with its increasing repression, hasn't succeeded in smashing the Catholic people. The resistance has grown stronger. Central to resistance is the armed struggle, but behind it is the community. The armed struggle protects the community: the community protects the armed struggle. No guerilla organisation can exist without widespread support in the areas where it operates – doors left open, houses where people on the run and arms can be hidden, people who turn a blind eye when they see more than they should, people to warn of Army attacks, do first aid, and so on. The strength of the Catholic working class comes both from the armed struggle and from community organisation. In Ireland we can see clearly how working class power can be exercised outside the factory. One example is the abolition of Stormont in 1972, which came about in the face of massive community mobilisation around street demonstrations, rioting, total rent and rate, electricity, gas, TV bill, etc., strikes. In the Catholic no-go areas the community effectively governed itself. The struggle has changed the community; changed personal and family relationships, and changed attitudes.

As in all situations of struggle, the involvement of women and children is vital, and their power and role changes. From their involvement in the struggle, women gain strength to challenge their subordinate role in the home. Women's part in the struggle has moved from the more passive one of support – meals for the boys on the run, or banging bins to warn against attack – to full involvement in the military struggle. At the same time, much of the resistance in the community is sustained mainly by the women. This is partly because the British Army has discriminated against women – men are far more likely to be arrested than women if they go on protest marches, and for a long time it was easier for a woman to carry arms past check-points. As women have become central to the struggle, they've realised they can 'think for themselves', and have increasingly questioned the attitude of the Catholic Church to family relationships, divorce and sexual morality. As women have spent more time out of the home, they have had less time for housework.

One of the forms of community action in which women have been central is the rent and rate strikes; it was usually the women who took the decision as to whether or not the family should go on strike. The strike was a protest against internment. At its height, about ninety percent of Catholics were on strike, and by September '71 the Stormont government had already lost two million in revenue. Although the SDLP claimed credit for calling the strike, and gained hatred for calling it off two and a half years later, the strike after internment only organised and made public a refusal to pay rent that was already widespread. The strike once more

brought the whole Catholic community into conflict with the state, showing the strong support for the armed struggle. The state hasn't taken this threat lying down. It has tried to use the welfare state to smash working class struggle. For example, the Bad Debt Act of 1971 entitled Stormont to withhold all or part of any social security payments (dole, pensions, etc.) from people who owed money to the state. Family allowances too have been chopped if the mother is on rent and rate strike.

Community organisation is vital in defending the community against sectarian attack. Since 1969, over forty thousand Catholics have been driven from their homes, intimidated or burnt out. At first, they were taken in by other families, but soon relief committees were set up to rehouse people, look after intimidated families and give help after people are arrested. The vital importance of this sort of community organisation showed itself during the Ulster Workers' Council stoppage of May '74. The totally reactionary strike of Protestant workers in crucial industries showed the vulnerability of the Catholic ghettos and forewarned of the situation in a civil war. Relief committees co-ordinated food, medical supplies and transport. An understanding of how the UWC stoppage hit the Catholic areas shows the reactionary nature of this strike. We totally reject the analysis that sees the UWC strike as progressive on the supposed grounds that it was an expression of Protestant working class power. Although the strike disrupted British imperialism's plans in Ireland, it in no way challenged the existence of imperialism in Ireland, and it called for intensified oppression of the Catholic working class.

In this section we talk to C in Derry, S and I in the Ardoyne and T from the Ardoyne relief committee.

## DERRY

*How has the armed struggle changed from defence of the areas to a more offensive role?*

C – The need for that shift became clear. This started with attacks on the British army outside the area and then moved on with the bombing campaign. There have been no civilians killed in Derry from bombs – there has always been at least half an hour's warning. The campaign has been aimed at the main shopping area, which is predominantly owned by middle class Protestants. The shopping centre has twice been razed to the ground and built up at least twice. There's also been bank-raids, The British press has tried a smear campaign on the IRA, saying their bombing campaign has been aimed at the civilians. This can be refuted just by looking at the figures from Derry. The only Derry people killed by bombs are IRA volunteers in accidents.

The Provisionals have been clearly seen as the only people



prepared to defend the people of Derry from attacks by British imperialism and Protestant gangs. Every time there have been murders by the British Army, there have been lots of people wanting to join the IRA. Support has been very, very strong and is still. The actual numbers in the IRA are nothing to go by — it's the support in the community that counts.

## BELFAST

*Have the troubles brought people closer together?*

I — There's always been neighbourliness, but there never was the closeness before that there is now. You see, most of us have the same attitude — I could be talking to her today and in the morning someone would come round and say B was shot — this is something you live with. Like us a few years ago. We were bringing in the New Year quite happy, and someone said, 'Goodness, this time last year my brother was with me', and I said, 'Ay, this time last year T [my husband] was here'. There was eight of us in the group and everybody had lost somebody during the troubles. And it suddenly struck us — we were crying and all the club was crying with us. And the next day we laughed at it, but at the time it was sorrowful — to think that everybody had lost somebody and we didn't know who was next to go. This makes a bond between people, and this year we were all in the club and we all looked at each other — it shows in the face, you know — and we wondered, will it be the same crowd next year, will one of us be missing?

*How have women been involved in the struggle? How has their involvement changed their role in the family?*

S — In '69 and '70 it was women who went round collecting for petrol bombs, not the men. The women would have surprised you. One woman, a daily churchgoer, comes to my door: 'Would you mind coming round the doors with me? We're, er . . . we're going to collect for petrol bombs for the kids'. And I says, 'Well, what does your husband think about it? I'm alright, I've got no husband to send out, is your's sent out?' And she turns and says, 'I've told my husband he's got to make the petrol bombs'. She did, that's the truth! And I says, 'Well, what does he think about it?' 'He's got to do it and that's just it, never mind what he thinks, I'm telling him he's got to do it'. Now I'd never

heard this woman give an order *once* to her husband. A neighbour of mine — I was very surprised.

In early '70, five men in Ardoyne were brought up on a murder charge. The evidence was pegged high against them. Everybody knew they were innocent — the police, the Army knew they were innocent. We started a Women's Action Committee. This was the best thing that ever happened to us. We sat in the middle of the town and completely stopped the traffic — this had never been done by women in fifty-two years. It was done by four or five hundred women on a Saturday. The police tried to shift us. Then they came in riot gear. We all had big placards and the police were trying to get them off us. There was this woman — she's only four foot ten but she's really game. She broke a window in one of the biggest department stores in town and took out this electric kettle and swung it round and round with the flex till it was right by this policeman's head, and she let the poor bastard have it. We done pickets on police stations and at the court every week for six months. We got so much support that at the trial they dropped the charges. The men were set free. These fellas had to be smuggled out of court because there were six or seven hundred Loyalists waiting to have a go at them. On the last day the court was crowded with women. And crowds of Loyalist women were waiting to have a go at us when we came out. We had to rush out and the men from our district had brought down furniture vans and mini-buses and anything that would carry people. We managed to get out. It was a real triumph. Women had to find time to do it — they just left the dishes unwashed. They thought it was more important to go out on demos.

I — Whenever there's a protest to go on the men can't go out because they'll be photographed. The Army doesn't have to charge out and arrest them, all they have to do is sit in the barracks and photograph them, then lift them when they search the houses. It's the women that go out to protest. And they — er — like a protest. It's no good saying they don't. Whenever there's a protest they don't go out in dribs and drabs they go out in hundreds. Many's the time the soldiers have fired CS gas and rubber bullets at women. And this makes the women more determined.

Before the troubles, you'd never see women in the clubs. But that's all changed now. They go and they are indepen-



dent. They had to become independent. The men were getting shot and interned and the women had to cope with the problems at home and support the men in jail. They had to make their own decisions. Before they had just silently suffered. Now the women are always discussing politics — they would never have done this before '68.

Before the troubles my attitude was a wife — doormat. It makes me sick to think of it, quite honestly. How stupid, how many years I wasted — it's incredible — and, by God, I'll never go back to being a doormat again. There'll be a lot of broken marriages after this, unfortunately, but it's a good thing. For the women whose husbands are inside, they're like myself only younger, well some of them only have two children. Well, they're not going to lumber themselves with five or six children just because their husbands are out, as they're going to make sure they can lead as free a life as possible, and as equal as possible to a man, for this is their way of thinking. You can't just turn the clock back. Women have learned through these troubles that they can reason for themselves, they'll never turn round now and say, 'He's a man, he's able to think better than me because he's a man.' I personally could never see any of the women we know in the district, whenever their husbands get out, scrubbing the floors. What they'll never be able to do now is push women back into the home.

*Has women questioning their role in the family led to a lessening of the influence of the Catholic Church?*

S — An awful lot. It's like kissing a bishop's ring, you know, all you can see is the glitter of the ring, and you know who's wearing it — a bishop. But nowadays, if a woman were to kiss a bishop's ring, she'd say: 'I wouldn't mind one like that', and she probably wouldn't have thought of anything like that years ago. People have progressed in their ideas about themselves and about their church, and it is the women who have brought forward these ideas as far as the church is concerned I think.

In the old days you couldn't say a word against the church, either in the North or the South. Nowadays, the Provos will discuss the question; they'll contradict things the church has said, where old Republicans would never have done. This happened a time ago — a Directive of the Bishop went out and the priests at all masses said that the people who opened the door to 'these terrorists' were as much terrorists as the men doing the shootings and bombings. 'If you didn't open your doors there'd be no terrorists in the Ardoyne'. And you know what happened? People got up and walked out of church in the middle of mass. And this wasn't just one parish, it was every parish. If six years ago people had told you that this would happen, that people would walk out on a priest . . . We know that a hell of a lot of priests are using the pulpit as a political platform — this should *not* be so. Everybody agreed that the priest wasn't there to preach politics.

*You've told us about the children rioting to defend the area, how else have they been involved?*

I — The children are fantastic. When the young boys and girls see anyone getting arrested, they are the ones who let the adults know that someone is being lifted. As soon as the soldiers stop a couple of fellas even just to question them, the youngsters will start shouting and you'll find one or two who run to the nearest house and say, 'Missus, they're holding the fella there, they're going to arrest him', and the woman will say, 'Who?', and they said, 'That wee lad at the corner there', or 'That man at the corner'. The woman will go out and tap her next door neighbour's window and say, 'They've got so-and-so at the corner', and before you know where you are, it ends up with twenty or thirty people after five minutes, as well as fifty or sixty children, around six soldiers, with their backs to you, and they keep on turning round and pointing their guns to make sure that you don't get too close.

The relationship between parents and children — um — well, I don't think there are any children there in the Ardoyne. The children are actually adults and the parents have given them their place as having sense. They don't want to run to their mummy to hide; the children run to their mummy to pull

her out onto the street. And the mothers wouldn't dream of letting their children down.

*Can you tell us some ways that the community has organised itself during the struggle?*

S — Out of necessity in these troubles, every area has had to get organised and bind itself together. One way the community has organised is the rent and rate strike. This began with the day of internment, the 9th of August 1971. About two days later the SDLP — John Hume and Gerry Fitt — advocated that the people of the minority areas go on rent and rate strike. That is, people living in council houses to go on rent strikes and also people that owned their own houses to withhold their rates and not pay their gas or electricity, as this would cripple the government and force them to release internees. The people did this very, very willingly, as they were a hundred percent against internment. Two years after this, the same SDLP, once they got power, turned round and advocated that people that had not paid their rent and rates should have the money stopped out of their social security. And this goes on today — people have their family allowance books called in and this family allowance and three to five pounds of their SS is kept from them until their arrears are paid.



Before the rent and rate strike, the rent collector tried coming in a couple of times. He got two streets collected and he went out as empty as he came in and that was that. The SDLP wouldn't put it that there was a strike on already, they would turn round and say that the men were hijacked and their money took off them — well that's lies . . . And the same with the Gas Board. The Gas Board got fed up losing their vans, losing their shillings out of the meters. They haven't tried switching off the gas, they don't dare. If one of their vans came into the area to switch off the gas, they'd be run out of the area to this day.

T — The strike was brought in to wreck the Executive. I don't think the Loyalists realised the consequences for their own people. They tried to wreck the minority districts by cutting off all public services (gas, electricity etc.), but they did not realise that the majority of the population in the district where we had no wholesalers or large suppliers in the area. We had to go as far as the South to collect petrol or food for babies. We had to run UDA roadblocks. We were running a UDA roadblock in the district where we had a lot of social clubs in the district who, when we called them together to point out the plight of the district, they all chipped in immediately and gave about two thousand pounds and some more. We were able to get the petrol and food. Fortunately the strike only lasted a couple of weeks. We had queues till three a.m. supplying bread to the district; milk when we could get it. We brought in turf, coal for the houses, gas, electricity, etc. We were able to get the petrol. To give coal for cooking, we proved we were capable of

### THE CURRENT SITUATION – JULY '75

The situation in Ireland is growing increasingly serious. The number of sectarian murders is rising – in recent months there have been fifty or more sectarian killings. The Loyalist majority in the Constitutional Convention means that, if the British accept the conclusions of the Convention for how Ulster should be run, it can only lead to a pro-Loyalist solution. The Loyalist paramilitary organisations – with the exception to date of the UVF – have formed a Joint Ulster Loyalist Central Council. A number of these paramilitaries have plans for a Loyalist Provisional Government in Ulster to take power if the Convention does not give them what they want. There are clear indications that pogroms and full scale civil war are likely over the next few months.

The British government is looking for a solution guaranteeing the safety of their financial interests in Ireland. At the moment Britain seems to be backing a Loyalist takeover, and making preparations for it. The new amendment to the Emergency Provisions Act will help the Army to smash support for the IRA in the Catholic communities. For example, the Army will have greater legal backing for searches, questioning and arrests. At the same time, resistance and support in the Protestant areas will be higher. The government must replace the Prevention of Terrorism Act with permanent measures.

The government is also using sectarian murders for its own ends. There has been a persistent attempt to obscure those responsible. Rees has recently claimed that sectarian murders are carried out by small fringe groups and not by the major paramilitary organisations. The UVF thinks differently – in a recent statement they claimed 'only' to kill known republicans, whose status has been confirmed by information passed on by the security forces. Meanwhile, it



1916: the Easter rising in Dublin.  
1969: the rising in the North.

overcoming the problems. We were much more organised than their own people. We came together as a community during that period – apathy had been setting in and the propaganda had created dissension. We realised then that there was a great community feeling in the district. It really raised the morale of the people that they could organise the area themselves. In an emergency, hundreds of people come to the relief centre to see what needs to be done. The committee keeps things going on a day to day basis in between times. If we need help we only have to call.

seems that the protestant Action Force, who are responsible for many of the recent killings, are linked to the UVF. And the British government has just announced its latest plans to use the sectarian divide to repress Catholics. After the success of the Catholic working class in keeping the RUC from returning to the Catholic ghettos, the British government is trying to use new squads – supposedly specially designed to prevent sectarian murders – to reintroduce police into Catholic areas. Sectarian murders are a product of the enforced division in the working class fostered by the Northern state, and Britain – as it always has done – plays on this division.

For Britain, the truce is part of a new, last ditch attempt to find a solution that suits Britain's interests. Since the UWC strike, a solution involving power-sharing, or an 'all-Irish dimension' is off the cards. Instead, the hunt is for an 'acceptable' Loyalist takeover – a takeover that would be agreed to by the Loyalist community, the Protestant middle and southern bourgeoisie, and that the Catholic population – hopefully, war-weary – could be forced into accepting. For the Catholic working class, the truce is a breathing space, a chance to recoup, recover and reorganise before full-scale fighting starts again. The strength of Republican forces in Northern Ireland will be greatly reduced, and the Protestant and Wolfe Tone's 100th commemoration in Bodenstein in June – this was the tone's argument for a long time.

In this section we talk to people in Belfast and Derry about the current situation.

*How has the truce operated?*

It's an attempt to cool the situation. Some regiments have been deliberately carrying out a knife-edge policy – going as far as they can and then retreating. At first it was touch





Farrington Gardens, burnt out by the Loyalists in 1971. The same could happen in 1975 if the Loyalists have their way.

and go. If the Truce Incident Centres (TICs) hadn't been operating, the truce wouldn't have lasted long. Only two days after the ceasefire was called, two high-ranking Republicans were stopped, asked for IDs, refused to give it and were held for forty-eight hours with no reason given. The whole thing nearly crumbled then, and despite repeated requests through the TIC, nothing was done about it. Eventually it was discovered that the army officer and civil servant concerned opposed the truce and they were then removed.

Since then there have been a lot of policy changes by Westminster. One of their main reasons for wanting the truce was to try and get Sinn Féin to participate in the Convention elections. When Sinn Féin refused, we saw on the ground an immediate, different reaction: intense harassment of SF members, even when they were going to spoil their vote. The boycott showed the support for the Republican movement. Since then, again, the officers seem concerned to keep the peace.

*Has there been harassment through the truce?*

**In Derry** — The Army have been keeping a 'low profile', allowing the UDR to take over a lot of their duties. The UDR are actively trying to break the truce. One time they stopped my brother in his van and they told him to get out. He said to them, 'It's the Army's job to search vans and people', and the UDR soldier who was there turned away and turned back immediately, shoving the point of his rifle into my brother's face, cutting him on the nose which needed stitching. He then proceeded to take a case against him for attacking them. There was no reason at all for this. It's only proof of the sectarianism that exists in the UDR and in the police who took the case out against him, and shows that they're out to break the truce because they see that the truce is against their interests.

**In Belfast** — They've continually raided homes. We had a home here — a young chap died and the home was left idle. It had been searched and wrecked a few times while he was living. We had a family very unfortunately made homeless by a fire. We decided to fix up this house. We were in the process of fixing it and the people of the district had started cleaning it out and doing repairs. The Brits walked in and wrecked the house. We were negotiating with the Housing Executive to buy it. They then refused to buy because they couldn't meet the cost of repairing the damage. Quite a few other houses have come in for this treatment during the truce. And I say they are trained for violence and want some sort of release for their training.

*Is there likely to be a civil war?*

**T** — It depends on what you call a civil war. If you look at the situation now — the guns are trained on the district; there are sixty dead; homes are burnt out. The total deaths in Northern Ireland is about fifteen hundred, all in a period of five years, and all violent deaths, in the period you might call civil war. Normally a civil war is when an organisation of the people want to overthrow the government. But it's the reverse — the people who want to maintain the government want to start civil war. The RUC, the UDR, the paramilitary groups, are playing loyal to the Crown and to Ulster — these are the people who threaten the civil war. But we've already had civil war for the past five years. We've had the power and weight of the British Army, the RUC, the UDR, etc., against us.

**S** — It's quite possible there will be a civil war when the Convention collapses. Militarily, the situation is that the IRA have fought a holding campaign with the British Army — they have held the British Army which is sixteen thousand strong. During that period the British Army has never been able to quash the Republican movement. In the eventuality of a civil war, the Republican movement can rely on the support of the people. Greater support even than it has at the moment, and let's be in no doubt about it, if it hadn't been for the support of the people over the past five years, the Republican campaign would never have lasted. It needed the people, both financially and physically — houses for refuge, houses for billets, to give food to men on the run. At the moment I consider it is a civil war situation.

The police reserve is a hundred percent Protestant. Most of them are dyed in the wool B-Specials who have a lasting hatred of Catholics. The RUC is ninety percent Protestant. About five percent are genuine policemen in that they don't want to have anything to do with it. You combine these forces together (six thousand RUC, four and a half thousand Police Reserve, four and a half thousand UDR) and they still do not make up the size of the British Army. The British Army plus all these forces cannot do more than hold the IRA and cannot make any genuine gains against the IRA. Certainly the IRA will be in a better position if the troops pull out — it will have control of its own areas. At present it has an enemy in the front (the Loyalists) and an enemy in the rear (the British Army). It would be delighted to get rid of the enemy in the rear.

**I** — If this Convention fails, I honestly believe there will be a civil war because the Loyalists — let's call them the Unionists: give them a nice name! — if they get their way, we will not accept their policy. Because this was the first thing we fought against and we're not going to give in just now, just to hand back to the Loyalists after so many lives have been lost.

# A QUESTION OF CLASS

## IRELAND: THE NATIONAL QUESTION IS A CLASS QUESTION

When the present 'crisis' in Ireland began — in the years '68 to '69 — it seemed simple enough to many British people, particularly to many working class militants. The Catholics wanted civil rights — and they were justified. The state of Ulster was a living barbarism of discrimination and there *had* to be change. That was obvious to even the most feeble democrat.

But it didn't stay simple. It became violent. The Catholic people were forced to take on the ruthless, marauding forces of the state; streets became battlegrounds; the Army went in and soon there was a guerilla war and a Provisional IRA. Internment was introduced, and almost the entire Catholic communities went on a rent and rates strike and NO-GO areas were formed. Once more the working class showed how divided it is, and the Loyalist workers gave support to the sectarian murder gangs of the UDA and UVF.

The most simple solution then for most people in Britain was to accept what the British state said about Ireland, and put it down to the 'mad Irish' refusing the kindly services of the Army and the British politicians. Only the small forces of the revolutionary left challenged that, and instead explained that it was Ulster itself — the state, the colony — that was the problem. That there would always be violence and sectarian divisions whilst Ulster existed, and that Britain was not a friend of Ireland but its enemy. Its enemy because it propped up Ulster and the Loyalist establishment. For that reason, only the revolutionaries remained the democrats over Ireland by demanding an immediate end to British colonial rule: SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE AS A WHOLE! NO TO ULSTER! NO TO THE SECTARIAN COLONY!

But even inside the socialist left, there has been much confusion over the Irish struggle. The way it has developed, the forms it has taken, have misled people about what the struggle is all about. In particular, it has led many socialists to see the fight in Ireland as something other than a *class* fight. And today there is a chorus of them — from the Inter-national Socialist group who, more or less, do support the Irish national struggle, to the disgraceful Militant group in the Labour Party Young Socialists who don't — suggesting how the struggle in the North can *change* to become a 'class' struggle.

Nothing could be more absurd; and nothing could do more to confuse the British working class about Ireland. *It may not be happening in factories; they're not on strike and few of them are active trade-unionists. But for the last six years the Catholic working class have been in the most resolute and fierce class struggle in these islands. And nothing else.*

How else can it be described? It is from the Catholic working class communities that the struggle has been waged, and it is there that it continues to be waged long after the middle class politicians of the SDLP have ducked in under



Derry '72: the IRA defends the community.

Britain's wing. And what is it when such a community does come alive: to say 'no' to twenty percent unemployment, or the shit, low-paid jobs; 'no' to housing shortages; 'no' to the state and its repressive armour, and 'no' to any other section of the working class which is committed to its own supremacy over them; to its own alliance with the bosses, and not committed to the working class as a whole. What is it but a *class struggle*? *Class revolt*?

Being Catholic in Ulster was the *particularly vicious way* that these people experienced themselves as exploited and oppressed working class people. Their struggle immediately brought them up against the 'national' question – the false border imposed fifty years before by Britain – because their immediate, most basic needs were denied by the very existence of the British colony, Ulster. But the national struggle in Ireland has been fought by republicans for centuries, and against the colony, Ulster, for fifty years. *But in 1969 this already heroic struggle was remoulded; remoulded into mass proportions because it expressed the class revolt of the Catholic working class.*

It's for this reason – and the preceding interviews show it – that inside the Catholic communities there has been such a radicalisation in people's attitudes and consciousness. Why, for instance, the grip of the church has lessened, and the influence of socialist ideas and socialist politics has become very widespread.

### 32 COUNTIES

The struggle in the North is also the most important front of the class struggle in the whole of Ireland, North and South. Although the struggle in the South has other battle-fronts, even there the main question is the border and the six-county state. Nothing stops the South so consistently; nothing threatens to bring out the class antagonisms more than the Northern situation – given the pro-imperialist collaboration of the Southern bourgeoisie versus the instinctive, if often sleepy, solidarity of the working class with their Northern Catholics. Remember the reaction to Bloody Sunday in the South, when the Dublin working class burnt down the British Embassy, investment fled the country, and Lynch, the Prime Minister, looked on nervous and helpless? This is very important to understand because it's here that we find the potential for a socialist Ireland. A potential for socialism that will not be realised by *changing from* the present Northern struggle but by *winning* that struggle.

The situation in the North is critical. The Loyalists are determined to cling on to their state and their privilege. And that despite Britain if need be. The Northern minority are faced with a very serious situation. Working class communities like the Ardoyne, New Lodge and Short Strand in Belfast are surrounded by Loyalist territory and are in danger of being wiped out if the Loyalists move.

Any defence of the minority and any successful destruction of Loyalist power will need the full involvement of the working class in the South. That's the crucial point. By themselves the minority in the North cannot break the forces of Orange reaction. *But* a mass mobilisation in the South on an anti-imperialist, anti-Loyalist basis will mean a conflict with most of the Southern ruling class who every day are chasing, legislating against, interning, torturing and shooting those who are fighting for national liberation. The very process of winning in the North will bring the classes in the South into direct collision.

The struggle against the Ulster state would thus involve all sections of the Irish anti-imperialist working class into the creation and development of its own apparatus of power and survival – military, political, community, defence, food and supplies, production, etc. It could also mean the internal collapse of sections of the Southern state apparatus – as we have said, mutinies in the Free State Army are always on the cards when the Northern Catholics are in danger and have happened before.

Thus the national struggle always *threatens* to initiate the growth and explosion of a revolutionary dual power situation in which the majority of the Irish working class

would be faced with the choice of continuing its own struggle and establishing its own, permanent workers state.

This does not mean that there would be an automatic move to socialism. This depends on the extent to which the working class, North and South, are able to push on and consolidate their own mobilisations and make *forever* a break with the Irish bourgeoisie. On the extent to which the fight can be led by a clear working class politics and not taken in and led by the Catholic, bourgeois, nationalists who cry 'Ireland free' to make sure that their own nest remains feathered, and on the extent to which all these revolutionary developments can reverberate through the Protestant working class and present it with an alternative to the Ulster supremacy and to the idea of being press-ganged into a Catholic state.

But the point is made: *class struggle*. That's what the existing national struggle in Northern Ireland is about. *Socialism*: that's what it can be about *if* the anti-imperialist working class can gain sufficient political clarity about its own interests and the possibilities of its own fight. But this comes down to the clarity of *class* politics and the development not only of the struggle but of a conscious socialist leadership *within* that struggle.

For this reason, it is important to understand the different socialist organisations involved in the Irish struggle. The organisations are: the Provisional Irish Republican Army and Sinn Féin; the Official Irish Republican Army and Sinn Féin; the Irish Republican Socialist Party; the People's Democracy, and the Socialist Workers Movement.

### SOLIDARITY

Of course, to begin with, we are in *total solidarity* with all *anti-imperialist socialist and republican organisations*. This means that we support them in their fight against British imperialism and the Ulster establishment. We're on the same side even if we don't always agree with their particular attitude on how imperialism and capitalism should be fought, and even if we don't agree with every action they take in that fight.

And that goes for the Irish struggle as a whole. We support the fight for self-determination, whether or not in the end that does lead to socialism. We can't say to the Republican movements: 'prove that you are completely socialist and will set up a socialist Ireland *before* we will support you against imperialism and its army'.

You don't demand that workers on strike understand capitalism before you support them; you don't demand that Black people are revolutionary before you support them against police harassment, and you don't demand that people of an oppressed nation are socialist before you support them against the oppression of imperialism and colonialism.

But to be in solidarity with all republican and socialist groups, whatever their politics, does not mean we have the same politics as them all, or that we do not politically criticise them if, in our opinion, they do not best develop the struggle for Irish freedom and self-determination.

### FORGETTING THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE

For this reason, we in Big Flame say that the important organisations in Ireland – the organisations from which will come any revolutionary movement – are the Provisional Republican movement, the People's Democracy and the IRSP. We say this because these are the three main organisations that have shown any understanding of the Northern struggle and its leading role in the Irish revolution.

Two other organisations see things differently. Firstly, there is the *Socialist Workers' Movement* (fraternal group of the International Socialists) who usually ignore the national question and instead concentrate on 'economic' issues in the South. As a civil war approaches, it is difficult to see how this organisation can fail to be swept aside. 'Economic' issues in the South are obviously important, but unless they are linked to preparing the Southern working class to take an organised line of class solidarity with their Northern





Searching a suspected infiltrator.

brothers and sisters, then they are effectively a *diversion* from the main question facing the Irish class struggle.

Secondly, there is the *Official Republican Movement*. Like the SWM, the Officials downgrade the national struggle. Occasionally they do take action against the British Army, but overall their position is to *reform* the Ulster state and not *overthrow* it. Their line of reforms is supposed to work to unify the Northern working class, Catholic and Protestant. So they concentrate on such issues as the proposed Belfast ringroad (now shelved owing to lack of money rather than mass protest), and fight for Catholic/Protestant unity against redevelopment and clearance. What the Officials ignore is that the divisions in the Working class are a direct result of the existence of the Ulster statelet, and that a precondition for unity is therefore the Protestant workers *giving up their allegiance to their Ulster protestant supremacy and privilege*. The Catholics can hardly unite with any section of the Irish working class which wants to keep its privileges over them. And, in practice, this means that unity is not on until the powers of the Ulster establishment and the sectarian state are swept away, until the UDA and UVF are demoralised and have crumbled.

After so long, this ought to be apparent to the Officials. Their boast that they have working links with the working class Loyalist organisations; their claims that leaders like Sammy Smyth (UDA) or Ken Gibson (UVF) are somehow socialists, is a mockery of the facts. The fact that, for instance, the UVF brags about its murder of Catholics, and recently bragged that it had tried to murder Cathal Goulding, the leader of the Official Republican Movement!

Since the split which has formed the IRSP, the Officials have lost a lot of their support. However it must be said that they do have experience of armed struggle. And though they do little at the moment to prepare the Catholic working class for a major Loyalist attack in the event of civil war, the Officials could play a role in the immediate defence of the Republican areas.

#### IRISH REPUBLICAN SOCIALIST PARTY

In terms of political organisations, the most interesting development in Ireland for some time has been the forma-

tion of a new party, the IRSP. The IRSP, founded in December 1974, is mainly a split from the Officials, though it has recruited a number of previously independent socialists as well as a number of people from the SWM, ex-Provisionals and ex-PD members.

The split from the Officials was based on a rejection of the way that the Officials dealt with the national question. They demilitarised the struggle in the early '70s when armed defence of the Catholic ghettos was needed, they played opportunist games with the Loyalist organisations as a consequence of their 'unite-and-fight' strategy. Above all, the leadership stifled internal democracy in the organisation. The grouping that finally split to form the IRSP were at times physically prevented from expressing criticism of the leadership's policy. This was made even more explicit after the split, when the Officials launched a campaign of terror against the IRSP which erupted into a feud in which several comrades of both organisations lost their lives or were beaten or shot.

The main planks of the IRSP's programme are: British troops out → support of all strikes in support of wage-claims - no redundancies and worksharing with full pay - a bill of rights. However it is obvious that there is a hangover from the politics of the Officials in such a demand as a bill of rights. It is a reformist demand which implies a role for the Ulster state, when the point is to deny *any* involvement of the imperialist state in Ireland. Secondly, the IRSP claim to be the only major organisation in Ireland which understands the relation between the class struggle and the national question. But this is far from clear. IRSP militants tend to talk about the socialist struggle as the economic or factory struggle, and the national struggle as the existing struggle of the Catholic working class in the North. We think that this is wrong. The anti-imperialist struggle is the main front of the class struggle for the whole of Ireland. To be a socialist in Ireland does not just mean being 'in' the factories as well as 'in' the national struggle. It means, mainly, to be in the Republican struggle as a socialist, i.e. to fight for mass involvement in the defence of the Catholic communities. It means fighting to make clear the *class* content of the Northern struggle and the need for an independent working class politics, North and South. And it means

mobilising the Southern workers in anti-imperialist solidarity with the North. The IRSP have yet to show that this is what they mean, and in particular some of the leading militants have expressed the idea that in the South the main political issue is the struggle in the South itself and not the Northern fight.

#### THE PROVISIONALS

Without a doubt, the most important force in the Irish struggle has been the Provisional Republican Movement. This is the guerrilla army of the Catholic working class and the organisation identified by the masses as the major and leading organisation. And the reason is very simple. It was the Provos who expressed the desire of the Catholic working class to go forward and take on the Ulster state and the forces that upheld it, i.e. the British Army. When you're in Ireland you realise just how much basic respect and regard there is for the Provisional volunteers because of this.

#### Leadership

The political leadership of the Provisional movement (the Army and Sinn Féin) is quite definitely a petit-bourgeois leadership. Its programme — 'Eire Nua' (New Ireland) — in no way expresses the class content of the Northern struggle. The leadership wavers on the question of the Southern state and mobilising the Southern workers, combining left wing rhetoric with little concrete action. For instance, the Provisionals achieve little in opposition to the repression of Republicans in the South. It has a confused position on the reactionary forces of Loyalism — sometimes opposing them, other times suggestion that they may be won over by discussion. And the movement as a whole has a tendency towards elitism, i.e. it does not see the need to back up the guerrilla army with political work and mobilisation of the mass of the Catholic working-class.

But many rank and file Provos and Provo sympathisers express the same doubts. Many Provo supporters are revolutionary socialists or moving firmly in that direction. Many understand that the Northern struggle is a class struggle that can and should lead to a workers' state, and not simply to some sort of mystical, petit-bourgeois, reformed 'New Ireland'. However, these people still see political change as coming *within* the Provisional movement because that is the one and only movement that has consistently answered the question of the armed struggle against the state; the armed

struggle in defence of the communities.

Whether the left-wing in and around the Provisionals can emerge as the conscious and organised vanguard of the Irish working class, that remains to be seen. At some time it will require a clear break with the petit-bourgeois tendencies in the movement. But for the time being — with the prospect of civil war — there seems little chance that this clear break will happen.

#### PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY

The PD is an important socialist organisation that has been virtually ignored by socialists in this country. It is an explicitly marxist organisation which consistently understood the importance of the Northern struggle, its class content, and so has refused to get drawn into an SWM-type obsession with the 'economic' struggle in the South. For this reason, it has often mobilised thousands of people in demonstrations on its own slogans and political demands.

Today PD provides the clearest analysis of the Irish struggle. At the moment, for instance, its voice is the loudest in warning of the dangers of an attempted Loyalist takeover and the need to organise to prevent that happening. PD is limited to Belfast, Armagh and Dublin and is largely absent in other parts of Ireland. Organisationally, it is still quite small. But this question of size and influence is not a technical problem, it is a political one. It was the Provos who bore the brunt of the armed struggle in the early years, and so it is still the Provos who act as the main organisational focus for Republican militants.

Recently, an armed group who follow the political line of PD, the Revolutionary Citizen's Army, has been formed. The effect this could have on PD's role in the struggle could be significant.

The success of the Irish revolution hinges on the success of the struggle in the North: the struggle against the state of Ulster. Around this struggle hinge all the major questions: the unit of the working class; the conflict between the Southern workers and Southern bourgeoisie; the development of workers' power. As the struggle develops so too will the need for a conscious socialist leadership. It's likely that that leadership will be forged from three currents: the Provisionals, the IRSP and the PD.



The British Army against the people.

# THE HISTORY OF DIVIDE AND RULE



B Specials  
Storm-troopers  
of the Loyalists

Now disbanded;  
but they live on  
in new uniform-  
that of the U.D.R.

## A HISTORY OF LOYALISM

Ever since England first invaded Ireland in 1169 (at the invitation of the Pope), the Irish have rebelled regularly. One attempted answer to this was to 'plant' a large population of settlers in Ireland. People clearly different to the native Irish and dedicated to continued British rule. These 'settlers' were the ancestors of the modern Protestant Loyalists.

The first settlements (during the reign of Queen Mary) in Counties Leix and Offaly were, as it happens, a complete failure. The few settlers quickly intermarried with local people and ceased to hold any allegiance to Britain. Only the rich feudal landowners remained trustworthy.

## ULSTER

Of all the Irish provinces, the most Northern one, Ulster, was the most rebellious. For almost the whole of the second half of the sixteenth century, Ulster was in open revolt. But in 1607 it was firmly defeated and this was immediately followed by a massive immigration of lowland Scottish Presbyterians, English Protestants and English soldiers. These were planted on the lands of the native Irish, the owners being driven out by force. The city of Derry was sold to a consortium of London merchants and renamed Londonderry.

Most settlers were no richer than the people they evicted. Most were landless peasants. The Scots spoke the same language as the Irish (Gaelic) and they continued to be exploited by the landlords as much as the natives. But, because the Church reform in Britain had barely touched Ireland, the newcomers were all Protestants while the Irish remained Catholic. And the way in which the settlers had

taken the land — by force — meant that the Catholics used equally brutal means to recover it: resulting in conflict from the start.

## BRITISH POLICY

Ever since then, British policy has been to encourage that conflict. Protestant peasants were given privileges over the Catholics. For instance, under the 'Ulster Custom' laws, a Protestant peasant was far safer from eviction by the landlord, and was entitled to the benefits and value of any improvements he made to his holding. This meant that Ulster Protestants had an incentive to improve their property by extending farm buildings and starting a small 'cottage industry', spinning flax. In contrast, the Catholic peasant constantly feared eviction and so made less attempt to improve the holding.

The Protestants were confirmed in their strong position by Cromwell's victory in the English Civil War. He invaded Ireland, and in the process of defeating the Irish supporters of King Charles I, had every man, woman and child in the towns of Drogheda and Wexford massacred. He then ordered *all* native Irish to move to Connaught, only one quarter of Ireland's land area. Those who refused were threatened with death or slavery.

Cromwell did not succeed. The Irish fought back in small guerilla bands called, in Gaelic, 'Toiridhe' — which later became the word Tory, which now means something completely different!

The later accession of a Catholic, James II, to the English throne, worried the Ulster Protestants, and they supported the invasion of England by the Dutch Protestant, William of Orange. James fled to Ireland, followed by King Billy (as



he is now known) and they fought an indecisive battle at the River Boyne in 1690. This is now celebrated as a great loyalist victory over the Catholics, though King Billy did not finally beat James until the battle of Aughrim in 1691. Ironically, King Billy's greatest ally was none other than the Pope, who thought James II was becoming too powerful. Billy was just the man to eliminate the upstart James.

#### THE UNITED IRISHMEN

After King Billy's victory, Ireland was held in an unshakable grip for nearly a century. The only resistance came in the form of 'rural agitation'. Small bands of peasants, faced with increasing rents and fearful of eviction, struck back at the aristocratic landlords with arson attacks on barns, hayricks or manor houses. Landlords were found murdered. Catholic tenants formed groups called 'Defenders', whilst Protestant tenants called themselves 'Oakboys' or 'steelboys'. Unfortunately in areas of mixed religious communities, each regarded the other as the traditional enemy in the fight for land. And the landlords, mostly Protestant, weren't slow in exploiting this.

But in towns like Belfast and Dublin it was different. Capitalist industry was developing and the owners, regardless of religion, resented the competition of British industrialists. New ideas of independence, inspired by the French Revolution of 1789, and the American War of Independence, were spread by middle-class Protestants like Wolfe Tone and Napper Tandy. Tone led the *Society of United Irishmen*, formed in 1791 to agitate for independence and the unity of Catholic and Protestant.

#### THE ORANGE ORDER

In 1798 the United Irishmen rebelled all over Ireland. Behind them they had the mass of Catholic peasants as well as a significant number of Presbyterians. The revolt was quickly defeated. But the threat of a people united against tyranny was not lost on the British establishment. They became determined that it should never happen again.

Previous to 1798, the landowners had regarded the Protestant 'rural agitators' with almost as much horror as the Catholic 'Defenders'. But now they took greater interest in those Protestants who had formed 'Orange Lodges': secret societies dedicated to maintaining the Union with Britain, and the supremacy of Protestantism over the Catholics. It is significant that the first meeting of 'Orange Boys' came soon after the beginning of the United Irishmen in 1795. This meeting was held near Loughgall in County Armagh (the area known today as the 'triangle of Death' because of the Catholics murdered there). The Orange Order quickly gained the support of the Verner and Blacker families, big landowners of the area. It also spread to Dublin where it was supported by members of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy.

#### WEALTHY BACKERS

But it was after the 1798 rebellion that the Orange Order really began to expand. And crucial to this was the respectability given it by support from the army and the aristocracy. By 1813, the Duke of York (*the Duke of York*) C-in-C of the British Army was a member of the Order. And in fact it was through army units returning from Ireland that Orangeism came to England – lodges being set up in Manchester, Ashton, Stockport and other Lancashire towns. The Duke of York became the English Grand Master.

The Orange Order became firmly allied with the most right-wing Tory elements of the establishment, and the rank and file Orangemen repaid their masters by becoming the shock troops of the ruling-class.

For instance, in 1818, when a huge working class meeting at Peterloo in Manchester was attacked by armed dragoons and men, women and children were cut down without mercy – who was it who followed up by assaulting the survivors? *The Special Constables recruited mainly from the local Orangemen!*

Similarly, large numbers of Orangemen were drafted in to break the strike of farm labourers on the Earl of Erne's estate, Co. Mayo, in 1880. Tenants and workers refused all



A Loyalist march. More British than the British.

dealings, even conversation, with the Earl's land agent, Captain C.S. Boycott. Their campaign gave us the word 'Boycott', but thanks to the Orange, the Earl's harvest was saved.

The history of the Orange Order is the history of working class Toryism. English workers in Liverpool, fearing for their houses and jobs after the vast influx of Irish workers in the 1840s, were attracted to the Order's violent anti-Irish and anti-Catholic prejudice. This was the basis for the strength of Orangism in Liverpool and the working class Tory vote. In fact, the first Tory organisation on Merseyside consisted of Orange workers, the 'Conservative Working Men's Association'. And the Order was responsible for organising violent attacks on early Labour Party meetings. Their anti-working class attitudes even exceeded that of the local Catholic Church hierarchy.

## IRISH RADICALISM

In comparison, the radical tradition of the United Irishmen, followed by the Fenians in the 1880s, through to the Easter Rising of 1916 and the Republican revolt of today, has been consistently progressive and anti-establishment. For example, the early textile union in Lancashire was based on the local organisation of the United Irishmen. The compositer of the Labour Party's 'Red Flag' was a Fenian, John Connell – who later helped establish trades-unionism in California. The entire history of the workers' movement in England is littered with the contribution of Irish (and Welsh) radicals and Republicans.

## HOME RULE

The Fenian (Republican) uprisings in Ireland in the 1860s caused the Orange Order to be reactivated after a period of quiet. The Fenian movement was put down, but a new challenge to Loyalism came, when Gladstone and the Liberal Party began to discuss Home Rule for Ireland. At heart, what the Liberals wanted was the votes of the eighty-six Home Rule Irish MPs. But the Tories, under Lord Randolph Churchill, famous for his son and his disease, were equally cynical.

Churchill travelled to Ulster to invite the Loyalists to take up arms against Home Rule. Nearly all the Ulster Protestants opposed any suggestion of Irish independence. The leaders were the local industrialists (shipyard owners and textile bosses) who feared losing their British market.

Though the first Home Rule Bills failed in Parliament, in 1912 Sir Edward Carson, Leader of the Ulster Unionists, had forty thousand German guns landed in Ulster to arm the Ulster Volunteers. Like today, the officer-class in the Army refused to put down their armed rebellion. Fifty-eight officers at the Curragh Army Camp mutinied rather than oppose them.

## WAR

War broke out in 1914 and the Ulster Volunteers joined the Army to be massacred on the Somme in 1916. Thousands of Catholic Irishmen also died because middle class nationalists promised Home Rule if they gained Britain's confidence by fighting in Britain's war!

During Easter week 1916, rebellion broke out in Dublin, led by the socialist and trade union leader, James Connolly, and the left-wing of the Irish nationalist movement. Though defeated, the Easter Rising had begun the War of Independence that finally drove the British from most of Ireland by 1921.

## PARTITION

But the Orangemen were determined to remain outside any Irish state that would refuse to grant them their accustomed privileges.

Ulster was the most industrialised and profitable part of Ireland. The first industry, textiles, had developed there because the Ulster Custom laws had created a 'cottage' textile industry. Following textiles came heavy engineering

(building textile machinery) and shipbuilding.

Much of the heavier industry was for Protestant workers only. The policy of the old landowners, of giving preferential treatment to 'Loyalist' Protestants was adopted by the capitalists in industry. Today there are hardly any Catholics employed at Harland & Wolff's shipyard, Mackies and Sirocco's engineering plants, and many other factories. In fact, Protestant workers fiercely resist any change in this.

Of course, the interests of Protestant workers, as workers, frequently clashed with the employers. Both Catholics and Protestants worked on Belfast docks, for example, and both joined the Irish TGWU. In 1911, led by James Connolly, they fought together for a shilling extra per week and reduced workloads.

Earlier, in 1903, Protestant workers formed the Independent Orange Order because the old Order was ruled by the employers. Though it co-operated with socialist and nationalist organisations, the IOO never really dealt with sectarianism. Once Home Rule became an issue again, it had no answer to the Orange bosses' insistence that Home Rule meant lower living standards for Protestants. The Independent Orange Order's radical MP, Thomas Sloan, lost his seat in 1910; the Orange Order closed ranks and the IOO disappeared.



## TODAY

In fact, it was inevitable that Protestant workers would support their exploiters and reject unity with their fellow workers. In an area of high unemployment and bad housing conditions, being an Orangeman may mean a job, not unemployment, or a decent house, not a slum on the Shankill Road. And it means being 'British' (something special) and not 'just another Paddy'. These are not easily dismissed considerations, and few Protestant workers care to. Today the bulk of Protestant workers follow the lead of sectarian murder gangs like the UVF and UDA. And they have flocked into the expanded Royal Ulster Constabulary and Ulster Defence Regiment to get guns and training.

The Ulster state is the guarantee of Protestant superiority. It channels British investment and subsidies into the Protestant community, even including a few crumbs for the workers. British policy is to support the Ulster state. The workers will only be able to unite when that state has been removed and British control in Ireland is ended.



## THE 'DIRTY TRICKS' DEPARTMENT AND THE SECRET WAR

We often see photos in the press of 'ordinary' soldiers charging round Northern Ireland 'protecting the people from themselves'. It's no secret that fifteen thousand troops are stationed there.

But an essential part of the British state's 'war effort' remains hidden. Indeed, the activities of the Army's 'dirty tricks' department, the assassinations, the mystery bomb explosions, the kidnappings, may never be fully revealed. Certainly not by the British press.

Back in 1972, the body of a 31-year-old Englishman, David Seaman, was found in Co. Armagh near the border. Three months before, on 23 October 1971, Seaman had appeared at a press conference in Dublin and revealed that he was an ex-member of the Special Air Service, the British Army's 'undercover' unit. According to Seaman, they had been active in Ireland since early 1971, carrying out bomb explosions to discredit the IRA. Seaman had wanted no part in this work but was unable to interest the 'news hounds' of the British press. His desire to 'tell all' led him back to Northern Ireland and, soon after, to his death. His death effectively removed a potentially greater embarrassment to the 'peace-keeping' forces.

### 'MYSTERY BOMBINGS'

Had he lived, Seaman might have revealed details of mystery bombings and shootings attributed to the IRA but, in fact, the work of the SAS. But there is sufficient evidence in certain cases.

For instance, on 1 June 1973, just after midnight, an Army patrol searched the offices of the Ace Taxi Services in Antrim Road, Belfast. Two young Catholics, Terry McGuigan and Malachy Devlin, were working there. Three hours later, a group of men in civilian clothes came in and opened fire, seriously wounding both. It sounded like just

another sectarian murder attempt in a mixed area. Except that both men announced that they had recognised two of the gunmen. They were members of the army patrol that had come in earlier!

Only a few days before this incident, a group of men in plainclothes opened fire on a car in Silvo Street, off the Protestant Shankhill Road. Local people assumed that they were IRA men and attacked them with sticks and crowbars. But the gunmen were rescued by an Army patrol and it was later revealed, by the Army, that the men were 'intelligence officers' pursuing 'terrorists'. But the intended victims of the plainclothes squad had driven straight to Tennent Street police station to report the incident and were clearly not 'terrorists'. Clearly, the Army was indulging in 'tit for tat' murder attempts in order to keep the sectarian situation boiling.

### TRAVELLING GUNMEN

It was to help prevent killings like these that the Catholics began to form unarmed vigilante patrols to protect their areas at night. Unfortunately, these vigilantes became targets themselves. On 12 May 1972, a group of vigilantes, members of the Catholic Ex-Service-men's Association, were standing at Finaghy Road North in Andersonstown. Suddenly, just before midnight, a car drew up and a man inside mowed down all five vigilantes with machine-gun fire. A statement from the Army saying that the men were shot during a gun-battle was quickly dropped and replaced by a statement that the attack was carried out by 'unknown persons'. Forensic tests on the dead and wounded proved that they had been unarmed and later Chief Inspector Drew of the RUC admitted that he had been informed that an Army plainclothes squad was responsible. No soldier was ever charged with murder. An 'open verdict' was returned at the inquest.

### PLAIN-CLOTHES SQUADS

The number of such attacks, involving Army personnel, increased rapidly. A plainclothes squad admitted killing an



unarmed youth, Daniel Rooney, 19, in Belfast in September 1972. In April the same year, they had wounded two brothers called Conway in Ballymurphy on their way to work, and admitted responsibility for the wounding of three Catholic taxi drivers on 22 June 1972, shooting them down from a passing car on Glen Road, Belfast.

This last attack differed from the rest because two soldiers, a Capt. McGregor and Sergeant Williams, were charged with unlawful possession of weapons as a result of the incident. Most interesting was the fact that the gun involved was a Thompson sub-machine gun, *not* a standard Army-issue weapon at all. In fact, when charged McGregor is alleged to have said: 'That ammunition had nothing to do with me. It belongs to the police at Castlebar and was issued by the Special Branch.' The point is that the Thompson is a gun associated with the IRA and so it was being used to discredit Republicans. McGregor, it transpired, was in the Parachute Regiment, which was not stationed in Ireland at the time. He was seconded to a more 'specialised' unit, Sergeant Williams admitted being commander of a unit of the MRF (Military Reconnaissance Force) which organises armed plainclothes patrols in Catholic areas. Both, of course, were acquitted at the subsequent trial.

#### REIGN OF TERROR

The plainclothes assassination squads serve several important functions. For instance, they help maintain a reign of terror in the besieged Catholic districts of Belfast. People don't leave the area at night, sometimes don't dare even walk along the street. This is obviously of great value to an occupying power. It cripples attempts to organise open



LIBERTY HALL, Dublin 1972.

resistance and, as the number of murder victims mount, it forces people to give up their struggle in the desperate hope that, in return, the Army will protect them from the sectarian gunmen.

But it's pretty clear that the vast majority of nearly five hundred Roman Catholics murdered in the Six Counties were the victims of Loyalist gangs like the UDA or UVF, often using cover-names like the 'Ulster Freedom Fighters' or 'Protestant Action Force'. While the Loyalists organise mass, indiscriminate killings, the Army can concentrate on more selective targets.

#### CAR BOMBS

One target, it is widely believed, was the crowded city centre of Dublin on the night of 1 December 1972. On that night the Lynch government was trying to push through new legislation extending police powers of arrest and detention and effectively removing any illusion that Ireland, North or South, could ever be a truly democratic country while controlled by Britain. It was clear that the British government wanted the new laws passed in the Irish parliament, but it was equally clear that a majority of Irish TDs (MPs) were against the new Bill.

The British state stepped in quickly. Two car bombs blasted Sackville Place and Liberty Hall in the city centre, killing

two bus drivers and injuring many more. Amid cries of 'mad IRA bombers', the Dail (Irish parliament) passed the new legislation without hesitation. Later, Lynch admitted publicly that neither he nor anyone else in the government believed Republicans to be responsible.

In fact, evidence points very clearly to British agents. Only a few hours before the explosions, an Englishman took a taxi from Dublin city centre to Enniskillen, over a hundred miles north in the Six Counties. Money, it seemed, was no object. But on arrival at Enniskillen, the passenger refused to pay, pulled a gun and ordered the driver to return to Dublin. The driver, not surprisingly, did just that, but reported the matter to the police.

#### BRITISH ARMY IMPLICATED

Nothing more happened until the following August when the taxi driver spotted the man at Dundalk races, just South of the border. He immediately gripped the man until a policeman could be called. Documents in his pockets revealed him to be a Major Thompson, a member of the British Army and also of the Conservative Party. Only a day later, Major Thompson, who used such desperate measures to get out of Dublin on the night of the bombs, was allowed to return to the Six Counties, no questions asked.

In fact, the presence of British agents in Ireland had been revealed soon after the Dublin bombs when an Irish policeman, Patrick Crinnion, and an Englishman, John Wyman, were arrested on 21 December. Crinnion, at first described as a 'clerk', turned out to be a special assistant to John Fleming, head of the Irish Special Branch. Wyman was a member of MI6. They had been co-operating, it was sug-



KITSON, the rising star.

gested, in the exchange of information on Republicans. But Wyman may have been involved in more violent activities, because Wyman was identified as the co-ordinator of a bombing and bank robbery group by the Littlejohn brothers who had been jailed for these activities. Kenneth Littlejohn admitted to bombing several Irish police stations and robbing banks, pretending to be in the IRA. These actions, he said, were authorised by the British government and designed to discredit Republicans.

While in Ireland, the Littlejohns had lived only a few miles from Co. Meath, the proven origin of the explosives used to blast the Parachute Officers' Mess at Aldershot in early 1972. In fact, Kenneth Littlejohn said that the day after the Aldershot bomb (which killed seven) he was phoned by the then Army Minister, Geoffrey Johnson-Smith, who congratulated him on the good job he was doing.

And, having escaped from Irish police custody, Littlejohn went to live in Birmingham. He lived there with a self-confessed police informer and National Front member until the Birmingham pub bombings which killed twenty-one. It was only then that the police moved in and arrested him. Maybe they thought that his activities as 'agent provocateur' were getting out of hand!

The technique of blaming crime on Republicans is particularly widely used. Unfortunately for the Army, soldiers invol-

ed in such operations may get carried away and keep the proceeds, or else carry out more crimes than required. For example, in March 1973 two soldiers, Lance Corporal Simpson (an Ulsterman) and Signaller Tynon, carried out armed robberies at Garvagh and Frogh Lough, Northern Ireland, dressed in civilian clothes. Simpson was alleged to have said to people being robbed: 'Well, that's a wee bit more for the cause!' Both were actually captured and sentenced to six years, though both had ten years' service and exemplary records behind them.

#### THE NEW MODEL ARMY

Mystery bombings, shootings, robberies and the manipulation of governmental and public opinion. These are part and parcel of the British Army today. They don't just fight in the 'front line'. They fight behind the scenes, ensuring the 'correct' decisions are made by the government. Already we have seen how the Army is capable of sabotaging the British government's plans during the Ulster Workers' Council strike in May 1974. The UWC stoppage was aimed to destroy the government's powers-sharing 'solution'. Yet the Army, supposedly just a wing of 'democratic' government, *point blank refused* to take down the UWC barricades which were openly intimidating workers from going to work. It was only the sight of soldiers collaborating with the reactionary UWC personnel that convinced most Loyalist workers to join the stoppage. The Army top brass, in the shape of GOC Sir Frank King, has since publicly opposed another government strategy, the ceasefire with the IRA. The Army has very noticeably separated itself from the rest of the state in recent years and is now allying

itself more and more with the extreme Loyalist 'solutions' proposed by the UWC.

Though this move towards a political role for the Army has been a response to the Northern Ireland situation, there have also been people within the Army hierarchy who have advocated just such a role. The best known is Brigadier Frank Kitson, a former brigade commander in Ulster and an officer in Kenya during the 1950s uprising. In his book, *Low Intensity Operations*, Kitson suggests that the future task of the army is to tackle 'subversion' in Britain. Following his experience in Kenya, Kitson urges the setting up of 'pseudo-gangs', groups of soldiers or policemen who carry out acts of violence attributed to the resistance force. He wants greater control by military authorities over press and TV. At the moment in Ireland, most journalists base reports on Army press releases anyway, but the occasional 'news hound' may actually venture beyond the plush bar of the Europa Hotel for a 'scoop'. Greater control over this by the Army will become essential in the suppression of the British working class.

If anyone thinks Kitson is just a right-wing crank with political ambitions, they should reflect on Kitson's meteoric rise to fame since his ideas were first published. He was quickly made head of the School of Infantry in Warminster, Wilts. The present generation of officers is being taught the importance of the 'peace-keeping on the mainland'.

The feeling amongst the Army top brass that they have a right to intervene in the class struggle in Britain is another product of the Irish conflict we could well do without.

## STUCK IN HELL!

COMING INTO THE STRUGGLE FROM THE OTHER SIDE

*Most of the squaddies in the Army are working class kids who join up for lack of anything that appears better to do. We're printing here an account by an ex-soldier who went into Northern Ireland in '69.*

Why did I join up? That's hard to say — originally it was personal reasons — I suppose everyone has. I was 18, things were bad at home. I had a lousy job and things like that. It was very depressing. That prompted me — it was either going away, down south or something like that, or joining up. I just walked into the Army office — one really bad day — and, well, it was all so fast. He said, 'Well, you've passed your little exam, do you want to go down for your medical?' It was so quick — it doesn't really hit you for three or four weeks. They give you your little book and ten bob, or whatever it was, and you're actually in the Army, signed up. Then they give you twelve weeks to sort yourself out, and you can buy yourself out for £20, which I didn't have. And you're in.

**Trades — Training** The initial training, it's hard, it's all just physical, runs, drill and that. And a bit of weapon training, but mostly drill, for the 'discipline'. What I felt was, I'd only got to stick it for three years, not like some poor bastards, in for six. You only met people just joined — nobody who'd been over there, you'd got no idea what to expect.

I went to Germany and just pissed about cleaning trucks. For the average bloke, thinking about getting a trade, it's crap. It's like anything — they pick who they want and that's it. I was just an ordinary rifleman — it's very deceiving for kids, the fucking posters and all the crap they put on the telly all the time. I mean, I'd say to anyone who's going to join up — just *don't*. You get pushed into what they want. I wanted to be a cook, so they said, 'Just sign here and we'll let your regiment know when there's a vacancy'. They never did. It was just lies.

**In Ireland: 1969** The first few weeks we were there, we were among the Protestants. There was a kind of lull. We



Rubber bullets.

weren't told nothing about the scene, just a few bits of propaganda and shown pictures of men we had to lift on sight. We patrolled up and down the Shankhill at that time. Just going round. You had two pieces of paper — the Riot Act and the Yellow Card. Funny that — it went: 1. Protect property; 2. Protect people; 3. Apprehend any kind of suspect doing anything. In that order!

When we first went in there was a riot with the Protestants against us cos they thought one of us had shot at them — it was an accidental discharge, and they went wild. That started it — the whole atmosphere changed. We just didn't know what it was all about, they didn't tell us. After that, we were moved out of the area into a Catholic area. I think they left that barracks on the Shankhill empty after that. Everything changed.

**Training after 1970** When we first went in, we just had

basic riot gear. But after that — Christ! Well, it shook me! It got more like commando training. We were trained to do house raids and things like that. They put you in street complexes in the camp, just like Belfast or Derry or Liverpool, and really put you through it — with men firing blanks at you. They'd put you through it again and again, like a brainwash, so all you could do was react. The whole attitude of the Army became that much tougher and harder. But the patrols over there in the Protestant areas, they were really light.

There were certain people — and this was a totally new thing — who were picked out and separated; allowed to grow their hair, beards, do anything they wanted before going over, to change their appearance. And given small-arms training. They operated over there but you were never told what they did — it was special duty. You heard gossip and so on, it was obvious there was some other force operating along with the army. But they'd always deny it, saying that the SAS wasn't working there, that it was working some-

where else . . . you know.

**Operating in England** When I was in, whenever I'd hear about a strike in Liverpool or Glasgow I think at the time I'd have broken it if we'd been ordered. Because they present it as just another operation, like all your training — just a domestic issue, with no enemy. There's going to be a lot of those in the future. And it's really tight in the Army — if you answer back, they slap you inside. When there's a riot or demonstration or strike here, they'll use just the same methods they've developed in Ireland. They will.

**And after** Well, I've been out three years. I wasn't in there when it really got heavy. But I had a job for a year after coming out with my month's wages and twenty quid a year for life. That's what's left of my £6 a quarter for being in the reserve — after tax. Been on the dole for two and half years, there's fuck all jobs. Last week the SS man came round and threatened me. He said people who are on the dole a long time tend to get in trouble with the police.

# NO TO THE JENKINS LAW



It's not only in the North where Republicans are harassed. The picture shows the attitude of the Southern police. In the so-called 'Free State' there are hundreds of Republican prisoners.

The only 'policy' that will allow the possibility of a solution to the crisis in Northern Ireland is British withdrawal. While the British government refuses to relinquish its imperialist stranglehold, it will be forced more and more to rely on repression to contain the crisis. The Jenkins Act is only the latest in a series of such Acts of containment. In 1922, only a year after the Partition of Ireland and the setting up of the artificial statelet of Ulster, the *Special Powers Act* was introduced. It was only supposed to last for 'one year and no longer' . . . It was renewed annually until 1928; from then on it became virtually permanent legislation in the Six Counties. It allowed unlimited powers of arrest and detention.

## POLICE STATE

Detention (internment) has been used *every decade* since Partition. 'A police state' even from a liberal position is the most accurate description of the legal set-up in the Six Counties. In 1974 the SPA was replaced by the *Emergency Provisions Act*. This was little more than a 1974 version of the old Act — a feeble attempt to create an impression of liberalisation. True, the death penalty was abolished, but all the powers of arrest, detention and so on remained. The right of silence, hallowed in British justice, has never existed in Northern Ireland. The armed forces were given the right to arrest on suspicion of an 'offence' being committed without even stating the reason for arrest. Vorster, the South African Prime Minister, acknowledged that the SPA was more repressive than anything he could allow.

Such legislation has allowed the British Army and the state, under a facade of 'legality', to develop and put into operation some of the most inhuman forms of torture in the world today. (See the BSSRS pamphlet *The New Technology of Repression*.)

## NO JUDGE, NO JURY

The liberation struggle in Ireland has for periods of this century involved the extension of military struggle onto the English mainland. The most recent example of this has been the IRA bombing campaign, leading up to the truce in 1974. The state has again reacted in the only way it can — with repression. The Prevention of Terrorism Act bears close resemblance to the EPA. It bans the IRA. This makes it criminal to belong to, raise money for, encourage support for, or organise meetings in support of, the IRA. All these crimes are deliberately left vaguely defined and can be used as the flimsiest excuses for arrest and detention (a man has been jailed for six months for selling a poster which supported the IRA). The PTA allows exclusion and deportation orders to be served on anyone 'concerned in the commu-



sion, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism'. This is equally vague, and the Home Secretary has sole authority to arbitrate – no judge, no jury. Similar legislation (the Immigration-Act) has recently been used against the Italian militant, Franco Caprino, who had been unionising immigrant catering workers. He was detained in Pentonville Prison in December 1974 and threatened with deportation. No reasons were given, but it was clear that his political beliefs were the cause. He was eventually released following a widespread protest. Two men (Noel McComb and James Flynn) were deported to Belfast under the PTA only to be arrested there under the EPA. Basically, the legislation is being used to get rid of people when the state is unable to convict in an open court – despite the fact that the rigour of criminal evidence is increasingly being dropped in Irish trials in England.

The PTA allows for detention up to seven days without charge (removing the centuries-old safeguard of *habeas corpus*, which prevented holding without charge over twenty-four hours). Fingerprints and photos can be taken without magistrates' permission. This effectively allows the police to arrest for seven days' uninterrupted interrogation without even charging the person, as they have shown themselves only too happy to do.

All in all, the PTA makes political life for Irish people in Britain virtually impossible. Even sending money for the relief of internees can be construed as being support for the IRA. And as the Caprino case shows, the legislation can be easily turned to much wider use.

#### WHOSE CONSPIRACY?

And the state has other legal weapons too. The Incitement to Disaffection Act has been dug up and used against people encouraging desertions from the Army. Pat Arrowsmith was jailed for handing out a leaflet explaining to British soldiers how to desert. Others have been charged to date. The use of conspiracy laws is becoming more frequent as political opposition to the state grows – as with the Stoke Newington 8 and the Shrewsbury pickets. All that has to be 'proved' is that two or more people met together and discussed something, whether or not they actually did it, something which might be criminal. The conspiracy charge is now being slapped on almost automatically in cases where the state's evidence won't otherwise stand up.

The pattern becomes clear. As the class struggle grows in this country, the use of repressive laws will grow. The conspiracy laws and now the PTA. And once these Acts are in use, it's very difficult for the working class to get rid of them. The PTA was renewed for another six months in May 1975 with only ten MPs opposing it. The SPA has run for 53 years! So much for the twelve months. So far (July '75), under the PTA around five hundred people (officially) have been questioned – and only one convicted. Thirty-eight exclusion orders have been signed. And now they're planning an amendment to further the process – to make 'planning an act of terrorism' a crime. Again, it all hinges on what you mean by planning. You could prove that someone committed a crime – but how can you prove they 'planned' one?

## TROOPS OUT NOW!

*The Troops Out Movement was started in September 1973. It has two demands: Troops Out Now! and Self-Determination for the Irish People as a Whole. Elsewhere in the pamphlet we explain what we mean by self-determination. Simply, it is the right of the Irish people as a whole to determine their own future, free from the two most obvious restraints imposed on Ireland by imperialism – the border and the Army Britain needs to prop it up with. Here we also explain why one of the arguments most often raised – that if the troops are pulled out there will be a 'bloodbath' – is false.*

*The TOM has built fast since its beginning. A series of demonstrations and other national initiatives have established it as a real presence in England on the question of Ireland. In May 1975 it organised a massive conference of Labour Movement delegates which overwhelmingly voted in favour of the TOM positions.*

*Big Flame militants have been working in the TOM since its founding. We believe that at the moment the TOM is the most important way for socialists in England to work on Ireland. In our work to build the campaign to get the troops out, we make clear our difference from the chauvinists, those who just say 'get our boys back home and let the mad Irish kill each other!' The presence of the Army is the most oppressive form of British intervention in the affairs of Ireland. Only by its being pulled out, not when the British ruling class would like to, but now, can the struggle for liberation be won. And in that process, we believe, the ground for socialism in Ireland can be laid.*

*The TOM has also produced about the best arguments for its own position that has come out of the left in Britain on Ireland – the Alternative White Paper. It's well worth reading. (And only 15p.)*

#### TROOPS OUT NOW! AND THE 'BLOODBATH' ARGUMENT

The argument that there will be a 'bloodbath' if the troops are pulled out is voiced by several different class interests. First, it is a staple argument of the British state, who argue that the troops' role is as a 'peace-keeping force', that they are more or less successful, and that their presence prevents

a 'bloodbath'. Rees acknowledged in the Commons in early 1975 that any pogroms would be by the Loyalists, and not by the IRA, yet troop deployment is almost wholly against the Catholics.

*'... neither the British Government nor the Army are intent on eliminating the sectarian threat in the North of Ireland. This is because a decision to eliminate sectarianism would also be a decision to eliminate the Northern Ireland state. Rather, their strategy has been to stabilise the situation while attempting to pursue solutions in the framework of the existing Northern Ireland state. Consequently, Army tactics have been to contain sectarianism at times, while conducting a relentless war against the Catholic insurgency, which threatens all British solutions which do not question the existence of the Northern Ireland state.'* [Alternative White Paper, Paragraph 71]

#### 'Withdraw them to Barracks'?

The state has a strange bedfellow in the Communist Party, for whom the 'bloodbath' argument is the only prop for their empty slogans on Ireland and their complete inactivity on the question. They argue that the troops should be 'withdrawn to barracks' and that a 'Bill of Civil Rights' should be introduced for the North. This position is riddled with contradictions. The barracks are nearly all on the edges of Catholic areas, just yards away, and withdrawal to them would not remove their oppressive presence from the struggle. Secondly, it fails to recognise the role of the army itself in disarming and oppressing the Catholics. Finally, it doesn't answer any of the problems we have raised concerning the nature of the class struggle – who is to enforce the Bill? The Army? It is a curious form of anti-imperialism that still tries to use our ruling class to legislate the self-determination of the Irish people! As with their practice in England, far from facing up to the questions of state power and the struggle for socialism, the CP's position on Ireland covers over them in two major ways. Firstly, it covers over the nature of the Ulster statelet and the anti-imperialist struggle against it. The statelet can't be reformed. As long as it exists, the minority will be oppressed. Secondly, it furthers illusions in the nature of our own state, our own ruling class and our own Army.

### What the Army's there for

The 'bloodbath' objection also comes from a lot of people who are otherwise sympathetic to the TOM position. They point to the frightening military power of the Loyalists and the apparent vulnerability of the Catholics in the face of it, and argue – perhaps – that, while the Army isn't exactly a peace-keeping force, well it sort of stops things from boiling over, doesn't it?

To all of these, we say firstly that fifteen hundred deaths in the last few years is itself a bloodbath, and secondly that the presence and actions of the Army actually make things worse. Prospective 'victims' of the bloodbath don't seem too impressed by the argument that the Army will defend the ghettos themselves, either. We think that a conflict of civil war proportions is virtually inevitable in Ireland, whether or not the troops are there. And the troops have made this likely to be more bloody. They have created, and will continue to create, the conditions for more deaths and block the possibility of any resolution – except on the bosses' terms.

Their deployment is almost completely devoted to raiding, disarming and harassing the Catholic population. They turn their backs on the increasing military power of the Loyalists. By siding with the Loyalist against the Catholics, they give the Loyalists more confidence. Some examples of this – when the army refused to obey the orders of the British government to break the UWC strike last May, they ensured that the strike would succeed in bringing down the power-sharing executive that threatened to diminish the Loyalists' control of Ulster. When the army gives information to the RUC and the UDR (the heavily armed ex B-Specials that Rees reincarnated at the end of 1974), they are helping prepare the conditions for a Loyalist takeover accompanied – necessarily – by massive repression. All gives confidence to the Loyalists.

Long Kesh, the camps and jails, and the merciless harassment of the people has also taken its toll, though at the same time it has stiffened the will of the nationalists to resist. The Army has collaborated with the RUC in allowing the Loyalists to intimidate the Catholics out of mixed areas into compact ghettos. Not only are they turning a blind eye to the campaign of sectarian murders by the Loyalists – they are actually helping, by passing over secret files on Republicans to the Loyalist paramilitary groups. After all, repressing the Catholics is an activity in the common interest of both the British Army and the Loyalist groups.

### Troops Out Now!

In the face of all that, and *because of it*, we still call for *Troops Out Now!* It isn't that we don't think there may well be more lives lost, or are callous. Simply, it is because we don't want to see more working class people killed, and the chance of our losing the struggle against imperialism in Ireland diminished.

On the other side of the argument, there are several things to suggest that the situation isn't quite so dire. The IRA is a highly trained, skilled army with mass support and everything to fight for. The Loyalists on the other hand are a much less unified force. If the troops are pulled out now, under our pressure, then a lot of that confidence among the working class Protestants would be eroded. Many were hesitant about supporting the UWC stoppage till they saw it would succeed *because* of the tacit support of the Army. And, finally, in a civil war situation it is inevitable that the people of the Twenty-six Counties would support the minority, that there would be mutinies in the Free State Army, and that there would be sections of that Army who would come and support the nationalists.

Even in a civil war situation we must still call for *Troops Out Now!* to help get rid of the biggest block in the way of the self-determination of the Irish people as a whole. The demand is aimed at *changing the balance of forces* in the favour of the minority. If the demand is won, then it would give a tremendous boost to the minority in their struggle. And, unlike the CP slogans, it focuses on the most direct arm of state power and its role in the context of the sectarian Northern Ireland state.

Just to get it straight, we don't have any time for the argument that goes – well, the Catholics don't want the troops out *now* – that's too sudden. Look what their organisations say! As far as it matters for us, the demands of the TOM are directed *against our own ruling class*. It is up to the forces fighting for independence what tactical demands they raise – not for us to *tell* them how to fight. And anyway, both the Irish Republican Socialist Party and the People's Democracy support the demands of the TOM, and the Provisional Republican paper has given a lot of coverage to the TOM. The main reason that the Official IRA call for withdrawal to barracks is the same as their distance from the struggle – they are not leading from inside the struggle of the masses. 'Withdrawal to barracks' means nothing to the people who have been kicked around by the Army and fought the Army for six years.



Catholic youths attack armoured cars in Derry.



Another encounter with the occupying Army.

# “A NATION THAT ENSLAVES ANOTHER...”

The struggle in Ireland is one of the most important struggles there is in relation to the fight for socialism in England today. As revolutionaries working over here, we have to have a clear idea what that struggle is and how we can best work to support it. And also how we can learn from it. For us, this means at the moment building a strong anti-imperialist movement here which can focus a campaign to get the British troops out and to allow the Irish people as a whole to determine their own future. At this point in time, that movement is the Troops Out Movement.

**The importance of the struggle in Ireland**  
It's self-evident that, as revolutionaries and socialists, we must also be internationalists. We hate ruling class oppression, exploitation and their repressive violence wherever it occurs *and* we support all struggles against ruling class oppression wherever they occur.

Our internationalism comes from realising that the struggle against capitalism is an international struggle, though often fought within national boundaries. Divisions within the working class internationally – divisions reflected in the inability of the working class of one country to identify with the struggle of the working class of another – are divisions which weaken the whole struggle. The struggle for international working class solidarity is part of the fight for socialism now.

But we don't say that the *only* reason the working class in Britain should support the Irish struggle is because of the direct practical effects it has on the class situation in Britain. There are very obvious effects, but we have fought, and will continue to fight, over Chile, South Africa, Vietnam... whatever 'tangible' influence they *seemed* to have on the course of the struggle in Britain. We are working round the Irish question for some of the same reasons.

**The Irish struggle has overwhelming and immediate consequences for the development of the class struggle in Britain.**

The outcome of the war which has been fought in Ireland over the past six years not only affects the overall balance of forces in the world between imperialism and socialist revolution, *for us in Britain it affects the very precise balance of forces between the ruling class and the working class.* Many of the interconnections between the struggle in Britain and in Ireland are obvious: we relegate Ireland at the cost of the British revolution.

A war is being fought thirty miles off the west coast of Britain in what the ruling class still believes to be part of the United Kingdom. It is being fought against the same ruling class and the same government against which the working



class in Britain is struggling. It is being fought *directly* against the same Army which has been used twice in recent times to scab on sections of the working class in Britain (the Glasgow firemen's and dustmen's strikes). We face the same enemy.

And, just as for the working class in Portugal, for the working class in Britain the morale and political confidence of the state is of great importance. In 1972 the whole strategy of the ruling class was smashed — in Britain — by the strength which came from the mining communities and then the movement around the Pentonville Five; in Ireland, by the militant struggles of the Catholic people in mass demonstrations and the total rent and rate strikes and by the successful armed struggle fought by the Irish Republican Army. In fact, *the setting for the victories of the working class in Britain was the defeat of the British government's policies in Ireland.* In February 1972 the Tories were forced by the vitality of the struggle in Ireland to reverse their policies; to negotiate a ceasefire with the IRA and to abolish Stormont, the Protestants' seat of power in the Northern Ireland Constitution. Internment, military confrontation and Bloody Sunday had not achieved what the ruling class kept promising — peace on imperialist terms. So when it came to the class struggle back home, the working class here was faced with its ruling class already shaken and lacking confidence.

In the same way, it's obviously no minor point for us whether the British Army emerges from the Irish war triumphant, and practically and ideologically well trained and confident in its ability to carry out counter-insurgency, or whether it emerges from the war unsuccessful and with a rank and file demoralised and wondering what it's all about. (Though we should be clear that Ireland isn't just a training ground for Britain. Ireland's the real thing. Ireland is a training ground only in so far as one major battle helps prepare for another major battle.)

Also, the war has been fought — and is likely to continue being fought in the future — *in Britain* as well as in Ireland. In this way, the Irish struggle will continually raise issues which we cannot afford to ignore in our political work as militants and revolutionaries.

#### Repression

The chauvinism in the English working class has allowed a massive repressive move in the state to develop with no resistance. And whole sections of the left have reflected this chauvinism by failing to fight it hard. The reaction to the Birmingham bombings was only the most recent example of the counterrevolutionary unity between the classes in Britain. At the Birmingham British Leyland plant (Longbridge), an Irish worker was all but lynched. The Prevention of Terrorism Act has signalled a widespread use of blanket terror tactics against Irish people in Birmingham, London, Luton, Bletchley and Bristol among other places. (Including the case of a Communist Party shop steward who was served with an exclusion order simply on the grounds of his 'political activities'.) Chauvinism ties the working class to its own bosses. It is the opposite of revolutionary socialist politics. Together with the material divisions in the working class in Britain, it reinforces anti-Irish racism against the four million or so Irish working class people living in Britain, and so further deepens the divisions within our class. On the major questions of the role of the Army and the state, it obliterates a possible clear perspective on them within the mass of the working class. The state could *unhindered* strengthen its powers because of Ireland — the Jenkins' Laws or welfare-stop legislation to break rent and rate strikes which have been a major anti-imperialist weapon. So far nearly five hundred people have been held under the Jenkins' Act for up to seven days without charge. Only a handful have been convicted of any offence.

#### Fascist base

Ulster provides a base for the growth of fascist and extreme right-wing groups linked to similar groups in Britain. It's no accident that Powell has chosen to base himself there, or that the National Front work hand in gauntlet with some of the most fascist elements of the Loyalists over there and over here (e.g. the UVF). This is the clearest indication of

the importance to the class struggle here. What sort of state exists off the west coast of Britain is crucial. Whether Ireland, or part of it, is socialist, bourgeois democratic or fascist is of great importance to our own struggle. We shouldn't forget how Spain is being used as a base and refuge for fascist plotting to destroy the workers' movement in Portugal. No revolutionary movement can afford to have a haven of reaction nesting off its west coast, particularly in view of the dangerous link of Orangeism to sections of the working class in Britain, especially in Liverpool and Glasgow.

The massive Irish immigration into Britain (both Catholic and Protestant), based on Britain's traditional use of Irish workers as an army of labour to be drawn on when it's needed, has led to a situation in which we should take very seriously the likelihood of a civil war in Ireland leading to some sort of mass 'political violence', spreading rapidly to cities such as Glasgow, Liverpool, London, Birmingham and Manchester.



Catholic house wrecked after Army search.

Finally, the Irish war has put great and increasing financial burdens on a state which is already economically weak. The costs of the war — both in direct military expenditure and in the subsidy by the British state to industry in Northern Ireland — are continuing to rise rapidly (currently just under five hundred millions a year).

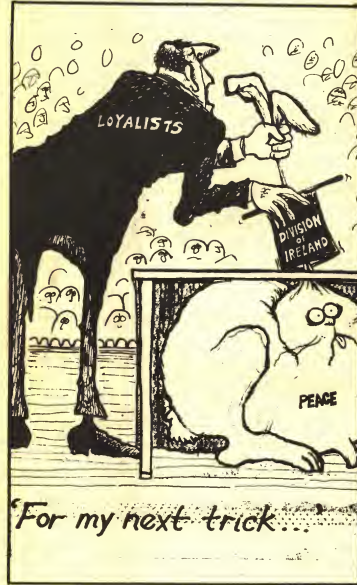
#### WE HAVE A GREAT DEAL TO LEARN FROM THE IRISH STRUGGLE

The Irish struggle raises directly questions of great importance for the working class in Britain. It poses answers to these questions which make the political differences between ourselves and certain others who call themselves communists, socialists, or even revolutionaries crystal clear (in the same way that Chile does, except that it's the *British* Army, and it's a bit nearer home).

#### The power of the community

The Irish struggle also demonstrates very clearly how the power of the working class (or sections of the working class) does not lie exclusively with the heavy industrial working class. (Yet it is on this basis — the ability of indus-

trial workers to withhold their labour power, organised in trade unions – that all Trotskyist groups erect their strategy for working class revolution in Britain.) The abolition of Stormont in 1972 came about as the result of a massive struggle in the North, centred in the *community*, in the Catholic ghettos. Precisely because of the state of Ulster many Catholics are unemployed. The core of this was the armed struggle, but the strength of the armed struggle lay in the mobilisation of the community around street demonstrations, rioting, total rent, rate, electricity, gas, TV bill, car tax, etc., strikes – the strategy of the *no-go* areas. In all these struggles the role of women and children was crucial. In fact, in general, the role of young people and women has been of great importance from 1967 on and, especially with women, has become increasingly important ever since. It was these militant anti-imperialists, so called 'hooligans', who formed the core of the armed struggle against Britain.



No peace will come through the division of Ireland.

#### Religious divisions

The Irish struggle has a *great deal* to teach us on the question of how to approach a divided working class. In Big Flame we all recognise that the working class in Britain is divided in all sorts of ways – men/women; skilled/unskilled; waged/wageless; black/white; Irish/non-Irish; employed/unemployed; young/not young. The question is: how do we cope with this problem in the fight for socialism?

In Ireland, one division dominates the working class in the North – Loyalist/Catholic. We learn from Ireland the hollowness of simply calling for the unity of the working class. This was a lesson which People's Democracy learned early on – right back in 1968 when a demonstration calling for civil rights for all: housing, no discrimination in jobs, one person, one vote – was viciously attacked by Protestant

workers. Throughout its campaign up to that point, and for much longer, PD made calls for working class unity, for non-sectarianism, etc. What they had to learn – and what the Official IRA and the Communist Party, and occasionally IS, continue to forget – is that a call for equality, for fair allocation of housing and jobs, etc., was a *direct attack* on the privileged position of the Protestant workers. The divisions in the class were real, based on the different material interests of the different sections of the class; they couldn't just be wished away with a slogan. This divide and rule policy has been part of ruling class strategy in Ireland for years, and is a basic weapon in the arsenal of capital.

In Northern Ireland the Protestant working class has consistently and massively voted for Unionist and Conservative candidates in elections, i.e. voted Tory. The ruling class has been able to maintain an ideological stranglehold on the Protestant sections of the working class, not by trickery and propaganda simply, but by maintaining the material divisions that it has created within the class as a whole.

In learning from Ireland, we can begin to see clearly how the struggle for the unity of the working class and the fight against reformism has to be based on the struggle of those sections of the working class which are fighting against the material divisions which are the basis, in the end, for the ideological divisions. This obviously connects up with our understanding of the importance, and nature, of black people's struggles in Britain. When we support autonomous black struggles, we are in no way giving aid to the divisions in the class, but recognising the way in which the class is going to be unified, *in struggle*. We must develop our understanding of how racism has been grounded in the everyday organisations of work and the community – which means for Black and Asian workers very different conditions of jobs and life than those experienced by large sections of the 'national' British working class. If we confine ourselves to 'educating the working class' about the dangers of the divisions within it, then we will find ourselves outside the struggles which are the only ways in which the class can hope to find some real basis for unity.

#### Unity

And, in Ireland, it is only the independence struggle of the minority in the Six Counties that can lay the basis for a real class unity. That unity would include the formerly oppressed sections, including those in the Twenty-six Counties, but, as well, those elements of the formerly oppressive sections (especially in the Loyalist working class) who came round to it. The division of labour and power has in the process to be destroyed.

On the left in Britain there is always a tendency to look towards the slightest signs of the divided working class in the Six Counties uniting. (For example, the period of fraternisation in Long Kesh, or the brief 'unity' of Catholic and Protestant dairy workers in the recent milk strike.) They give these signs great importance. We must guard against that, understanding how the *very existence* of the statelet of Northern Ireland creates and reproduces the material and ideological divisions within the class. As long as that state exists, there can be no hope of any firmly founded working class revolutionary unity developing. As long as most sections of the working class in Britain (divided again by the international division of labour), and even most militants in Britain, remain hostile to the struggle in Ireland – then for revolutionaries there will be a real conflict between the needs of the struggle in Ireland and in Britain. For too long revolutionaries have put the temporary needs of the revolution in Britain *above* the needs of the struggle in Ireland. That is chauvinism – the victory of the Irish struggle is ours too.

#### Racism

Racism and chauvinism are closely linked ideologies. Their roots both lie in the international division of labour, and in the need of capital to maintain a 'reserve army of labour'. At the moment, the ruling class is attempting to use Ireland to deepen the divisions within the working class in Britain. What Marx said has never been truer – 'A nation that oppresses another can never itself be free'.

# GLOSSARY

## REPUBLICAN AND SOCIALIST GROUPS

CLANN na hÉIREANN – Organisation of Irish people in Britain, linked to Official Sinn Féin.

CUMANN na mBANN – Women's section of the Provos.

CUMANN na gCAILINI – Youth section of the Cumann na mBan.

FIANNA ÉIREANN – Youth Section of the IRA.

IRA Irish Republican Army. Formed in 1919. Split in January 1970 into *Provisional IRA* and *Official IRA*.

IRSP Irish Republican Socialist Party. Formed in December 1974 by a split from the Official IRA over the importance of the national question.

NICRA Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association. Early civil rights organisation; support declined as armed struggle escalated. Now dominated by the Officials and the Communist Party of Ireland.

PD People's Democracy. Formed 1968 during civil rights campaign. Since the early '70s has been a revolutionary marxist organisation.

PLA People's Liberation Army. Armed group supporting IRSP.

RCA Revolutionary Citizens' Army. Armed group supporting PD.

RMG Revolutionary Marxist Group. Small. Irish section of the 4th International. Linked to International Marxist Group in Britain.

SAOR ÉIRE Small, elite armed Republican group to the left of the Provos. Most of its leadership now in jail in the South.

SINN FEIN Political wing of the IRA. Since the split there has been a Provisional Sinn Féin and an Official Sinn Féin. In Britain Sinn Féin is an organisation of Irish people linked to Provisional Sinn Féin.

SWM Socialist Workers' Movement. Small revolutionary group linked to the International Socialists in Britain.

## LOYALIST GROUPS

DOWN ORANGE WELFARE – Paramilitary group led by Colonel Peter Edward Brush, Assembly Member.

LAW Loyalist Association of Workers. superseded by the UWC

PAF Protestant Action Force. Sectarian murder gang.

RED HAND COMMANDOS – Sectarian murder gang. Breakaway from the UVF.

UDA Ulster Defence Association. Formed 1972. Largest Protestant paramilitary group.

UFF Ulster Freedom Fighters. Sectarian murder gang, probably linked to the UVF.

UVF Ulster Volunteer Force. Founded 1912 by Carson. Re-formed 1966. Second largest Protestant paramilitary group.

UWC Ulster Workers' Council. Responsible for May '74 stoppage which led to the collapse of Sunningdale. Made up of members of Vanguard Service Corps, Orange Volunteers and ex-LAW, and several independents.

VANGUARD SERVICE CORPS – Paramilitary group linked to the Vanguard Party.

## PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS

### In the North

ALLIANCE PARTY – Middle-class, 'power-sharing' party.

DUP Democratic Unionist Party. Led by Ian Paisley. In the UUUC.

NILP Northern Ireland Labour Party. Small social democratic party, based on declining Protestant trade union support.

OUP Official Unionist Party. Led by Harry West. In the UUUC.

REPUBLICAN CLUBS – Official Sinn Féin electoral front.

SDLP Social Democratic Labour Party. Gerry Fitt, etc. Catholic Party pro 'power-sharing'.

UPNI Unionist Party of Northern Ireland. Led by Brian Faulkner. Now totally eclipsed.

UUUC United Ulster Unionist Council. Amalgamation of three parties – DUP, OUP and Vanguard.

VANGUARD UNIONIST PARTY – Led by Bill Craig. Has own armed group, Vanguard Service Corps.

### In the South

FIANNA FAIL Erstwhile Southern Republican Parliamentarians. Led by 'Union' Jack Lynch. Totally pro-imperialist.

FINE GAEL Pro-imperialist Southern parliamentarians. Now in government. Led by Liam Cosgrave.

LABOUR PARTY – Led by Brendan Corish; spokesman Conor Cruise O'Brien. Part of present coalition government.

## PAPERS

AN PHOBLAIGHT – Provo Sinn Féin, Dublin.

COMBAT UVF.

LOYALIST NEWS – UDA.

THE PLOUGH RMG.

REPUBLICAN NEWS – Provo Sinn Féin, Belfast.

ROSC CATHA Clann na hÉireann.

STARRY PLOUGH – IRSP

UNFREE CITIZEN – PD.

UNITED IRISHMAN – Official Sinn Féin, Dublin.

## ARMY AND POLICE

B-SPECIALS Protestant auxiliary police force. Disbanded two years ago.

BRITS The British Army (term used by the Catholics in the North).

MRF Military Reconnaissance Force. British 'dirty tricks' unit.

RUC Royal Ulster Constabulary. The police. 95% Protestant, 6,000 men.

RUC RESERVE Recently expanded to 4,000. Nearly all Protestant.

SAS Special Air Service. British 'dirty tricks' unit.

UDR Ulster Defence Regiment. 8,000 strong. Mostly part-time. Almost exclusively Protestant and heavily infiltrated by Loyalist extremist groups, particularly the 'For Ulster' group, responsible for a number of sectarian murders committed while on duty.

## JAILS

ARMAGH Women's prison in the North.

CRUMLIN ROAD – Men's jail in Belfast.

CURRAGH Men's jail in the South.

LIMERICK Women's jail in the South.

LONG KESH (Officially the 'Maze'). Men's internment camp near Belfast. Also has sentenced political prisoners.

MAGILLIGAN Internment camp for men near Derry.

MAIDSTONE Prison ship in Belfast once used for internees.

MOUNTJOY Men's jail in the South. Site of the famous helicopter escape.

PORT LAOISE Men's jail in the South.



# CHRONOLOGY

1169 First main English invasion of Ireland.  
 1607 First main 'plantation' of settlers in Ulster.  
 1649 Cromwell invades Ireland to crush Catholic and Presbyterian rebels.  
 1672 James II comes to the throne.  
 1688 William of Orange replaces James as king.  
 1690 Battle of the Boyne.  
 1795 Orange Order first formed.  
 1798 United Irishmen revolt.  
 1845 The famine begins.  
 1848 'Young Irelanders' rebellion.  
 1867 Fenian uprising.  
 1875 Charles Parnell elected as 'Home Rule' MP for Meath.  
 1879-82 The 'land war' — peasants versus landlords.  
 1896 James Connolly forms the Irish Socialist Republican Party.  
 1907 Belfast dockers' strike.  
 1913 Dublin General Strike.  
 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin.  
 1921 Treaty signed partitioning Ireland and giving nominal independence to the Southern 26 Counties.  
 1921-2 Irish Civil War.  
 1932 Catholic and Protestant unemployed workers briefly unite in Belfast.  
 1936 Irish Blueshirts go to fight for Franco in Spain; IRA goes to fight against him.  
 1956-62 Sporadic IRA attacks on border targets.  
 1965 Communist Party-inspired socialists take over the Republican movement.  
 1966 Recently formed Ulster Volunteer Force murders two Catholics, wounds others.  
 1968 Beginning of Civil Rights movement in 6 Counties.  
 1969 August. Attacks by Orange mobs on Catholic ghettos in Belfast: 9 people killed and 500 houses (mostly Catholic) burnt out. British troops move in. December. IRA Army Council splits.  
 1970 January. Provisional IRA formed.  
 1971 February 6th. First British soldier killed on New Lodge Road.  
 July 7th. Two unarmed men shot dead by soldiers in Derry. Massive rioting follows.  
 August 9th. Internment introduced. Hundreds of people lifted. IRA operations increase accordingly.  
 1972 January 30th. Bloody Sunday in Derry. 13 civilians shot dead. Another dies later.  
 March 24th. Stormont suspended. Direct rule from Westminster imposed as resistance continues to increase.  
 June 26th. Ceasefire between British Army and IRA begins.  
 July 9th. British Army attacks Catholic families in Lendadoon. Ceasefire ends.  
 July 21st. Bloody Friday. 'Security' forces ignore bomb warnings, allowing 9 people to die in Belfast. This gives the necessary excuse for:  
 July 30th. 'Operation Motorman' — No-go areas invaded. Set up new Army posts in schools and sports grounds.  
 1973 So far 200 soldiers and policemen have died. Over 1,000 injured. 75 IRA members dead. IRA begins to use RPG7 rocket launchers.  
 January. First woman, Liz McKee aged 19, interned.  
 February 3rd. 6 unarmed civilians shot dead by Army on New Lodge Road.  
 March 20th. British announce their 'White Paper' on Ireland. New elections for Stormont.

1974 February. Labour government elected. Merlyn Rees becomes Secretary of State for Northern Ireland; Stan Orme, Under-Secretary.  
 May 14th. UWC stoppage begins.  
 May 29th. Brian Faulkner resigns. The end of Sunningdale.  
 May 30th. UWC stoppage finishes. The Loyalists have got what they want — the end of power-sharing.  
 June 4th. Michael Gaughan dies in Parkhurst Jail, Isle of Wight, as a result of hunger strike.  
 July. Government White Paper planning Constitutional Convention.  
 October 15th/16th. Long Kesh burnt by Republican prisoners.  
 December 22nd. First ceasefire begins between Provisional IRA and British Army.  
 1975 January 10th. Ceasefire breaks down.  
 January 16th. Ceasefire resumed.  
 May 1st. Convention elections.



self-defence

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Everybody has this preconceived idea that we want to join with Southern Ireland as it is. We want to be an all-Ireland Socialist Republic – we don't want to go down South and live under the government that they have there. It's like putting your hand into the fire and then taking it out and putting it into the furnace, you're not improving anything, you're not alleviating the pain and suffering, you're just going from bad to worse.

This is the only way I can put it down to . . . Do not try to improve on the government, get rid of it – for fuck's sake get rid of it. You'll never improve on it. Then you can build from there. We'll never try to improve on the government we've got, we'll remove it first – this is what we have done. Gerry Fitt and those creeps always say they are going to work wonders for us . . . promises, promises, promises . . . and our fight is that we have lived too long on promises and our eyes have been opened and we've learned. We've had a hard lesson learned, but our eyes have been opened and we've learned what we want. We want better conditions, and we don't want some man coming down and saying, 'I'll give you a pound or two extra, but you'll have to work an extra five hours, and then I'll go off for three months out of a year at a time to the Bahamas while you, you silly poor old cow, you'll be lucky if you get a week-end away'. Well, these things aren't good enough, you'll have to destroy the system first and get rid of all the things that have oppressed you, and have oppressed the workers, the people and the women who have been oppressed by the government, and you have to build a better structure for the benefit of everybody like us in the North. We hope what comes out of all this trouble in the future will be for the benefit of everybody – Catholics and Protestants.

*Eileen, Ardoyne 1975*